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MARIE CORELLI

MARIE CORELLI

The Writer and the Woman

BY

THOMAS F. G. COATES

Author of "The Life of Lord Rosebery"

AND

R. S. WARREN BELL

Author of "Bachelorland," &c.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS ON PLATE PAPER

London: HUTCHINSON & CO.
Paternoster Row 1903

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G. COATES

JOHN BELL

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PREFACE

MISS MARIE CORELLI'S unique personality has aroused interest and curiosity among all classes of society, and we are aware that the present work will be diligently searched for intimate information regarding the subject of these pages. It behoves us, therefore, to remind those who peruse this volume that the writing of contemporary biography is a most delicate literary performance; so, while it has been our aim to set before the public as many particulars as possible concerning Marie Corelli the Woman—as distinct from Marie Corelli the Writer—it will be apparent to the least intelligent of our patrons that, in common courtesy to Miss Corelli, it is possible for us to publish only a limited number of personal minutiæ concerning the novelist during her lifetime.

In making a general survey of Miss Corelli's various books, we have endeavoured, in each case, to quote such passages as may be read with interest

independently of the context, or such as tend to explain the spirit animating the novelist whilst engaged upon the volume under treatment.

It has been our endeavour to keep this biographical study free from offence to any living person, or to the memory of any who have passed away. In cases where we have found it necessary to refer in vigorous terms to the words or conduct of certain individuals, we have been actuated solely by a desire to have justice done to Miss Corelli. And in this respect we prefer not to be regarded as her champions so much as "counsel" briefed for the

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MARIE CORELLI

The Writer and the Woman

CHAPTER I

THE HEROINE OF THE STORY

"KEEP a brave heart. You are steadily rising. People recognise that you are an artist working with love, not a machine producing novels against banknotes, with no interest in its work. But keep a good heart, little lady. It is the way with people of imagination and keen sensibility to have their moments of depression. . . . I believe you will emerge out of all this with your brave little spirit, and I shall rejoice to see you successful, because I believe you will not be spoilt by success."

Thus wrote George Bentley, the publisher, to Marie Corelli on November 15th, 1888. At that time only three of her books had appeared—"A Romance of Two Worlds," "Vendetta,"

and "Thelma"—and she was engaged upon the latter portion of "Ardath." She was in the spring of her career, probing the Unknown and the Unseen, the Long Ago and the Future with daring flights of fancy that had already set the world wondering.

Meanwhile, Mr. Bentley watched over his *protégée* with a care that was almost parental. A number of extracts from his wise and helpful letters will be given in the course of this work; and the reader will not fail to observe that there was very much more in Mr. Bentley's attitude than a mere desire to coin pretty expressions for the benefit of a charming young lady possessed of undeniable

Lewes and George Eliot, on the other, to appreciate in full the power of encouragement and the influence a publisher possesses in his negotiations with a writer of promise.

Of a truth, Marie Corelli had need of such a friend, for her early career, as everybody knows, was thorny and troublous. A publisher greedy for a golden harvest might have prevailed upon her to write quickly, and, as a natural consequence, not at her best, for the certain gains which such work would produce in abundance. Mr. Bentley deprecated undue hurry. "You are now a person," says one of his characteristic letters, "of sufficient importance not to have to depend on appearance or non-appearance. You have shown not only talent, but versatility, and that you are not a mere mannerist with one idea repeating itself in each book—consequently, when you next come, there will be expectation."

In advising one possessed of so seemingly inexhaustible a fund of mental riches, Mr. Bentley was undertaking no light task. Moreover, he was offering counsel to a writer, who, to many people, was an absolute enigma.

For when Marie Corelli appeared as a novelist she was altogether new. She was something entirely fresh, and, to a certain extent, incomprehensible; as a result, she was reviled, she was told that she

was impossible, she was treated as a pretending upstart : the critics would have none of her.

But her success with her first book, "A Romance of Two Worlds," was due to itself, and not to either the praise or censure of the Press. Only four reviews of this romance appeared, each about ten lines long, and none of the four would have helped to sell a single copy. But the public got hold of it. People began to talk about it and discuss it. Then it was judged worth attacking, and the more continuous its sale the more it was jeered at by the critical fault-finders.

Marie Corelli did not invite adverse criticism.

of "Barabbas" and the distinctly unfair comments that book received that she at last threw down the gauntlet, and forbade her publishers to send out any more of her books for review.

This action practically put an end to the discussion of her works in the literary journals by critics with warped ideas of fair play. For they failed to remember that, though his draftsmanship may here and there display a flaw, an artist should be judged by the conception of his design—by his colouring —by the intention of his work as a whole.

Five years have elapsed since the one-sided truce was called; those critics, wandering by the book-shops, see people issuing therefrom bearing in their hands the hated volumes—the brain-children of the woman who had met them in unequal combat. They read in the papers of the gigantic sales of these works; they lift their hands in horror, and sigh for the gone days of authors who appealed but to the cultured few. So waggeth the world of letters; so arriveth that person to be trampled on—offend he or she the critics by ever so little—the New Writer.

It is manifestly unfair that a novelist should criticise novels; yet this is frequently done. It goes without saying that the novelist who devotes valuable time to reading and criticising the works of his brethren in art cannot be in very great

demand, as fiction is paid for at a much higher rate than reviewing. That Miss Corelli's earlier works were submitted for valuation to those engaged—if we may use a commercial phrase—in the same line of business, may account for the bitterness that characterised many of the notices. Let the critic criticise, and the novelist write novels; then, each attending to his trade, the new writer will receive fairer play.

The rough-and-tumble journey through the now defunct house of Bentley which "A Romance of Two Worlds" experienced prompts us to question the advisability of appointing novelists to act

the Holy Synod in Russia, and "Barabbas" has been translated into Persian, Greek, and Hindustani. And these are but two instances of her universality. Why is Marie Corelli read the world over, while the authors upon whom many responsible judges of literature shower encomiums can claim but an Anglo-Saxon public, and not a tremendous one then?

It is because, primarily, her chief mission is to exploit, with knowledge, with conviction, and with limitless zeal, the most vital question of this or any age—man's religion. Since the world was created this has been the chief motive of humanity's actions. The Israelites, for taking to themselves false gods, were sold into bondage; thousands of years later, because the tomb of Christ was threatened, Christian Europe, putting aside international differences, arose in pious wrath and sent forth its men of the Red Cross to do battle with the infidels. In misguided zeal, and prompted by a morbid fanaticism, "bloody" Mary destroyed the peace of our own fair land, and earned for her memory undying execration by burning at the stake the unfortunates who differed from her in their religious views. The impiety of its rulers was the root of the evil which plunged France into the throes of a ghastly Revolution. Even on every coin of the realm, at the present day, on every sovereign that changes

hands at race meetings, on every penny that the street arabs play pitch and toss with, we are reminded that the reigning monarch is the Defender of our "Faith."

A simple belief in God pervades everything that Marie Corelli has written, and from this devout standpoint she views all those other things which constitute mundane existence — Love, Marriage, buying and selling, social intercourse, art, science, and education.

Her books abound in passages which bewail the fact that—to extract a phrase from "The Master Christian"—"the world is not with Christ to-day." Her sole weapons, pen and paper, the author of

Photo by] [*Thos. Fall.*

MARIE CORELLI'S PET YORKSHIRE TERRIER "CZAR."

Photo by] [*Thos. Fall.*

WHAT BECOMES OF THE PRESS CUTTINGS!

[*To face p.* 8.

if all benefits, blessings and warnings are unheeded, then at last the bolt falls suddenly and with terrific effect. So with nations—so with churches—so with the world!"

Marie Corelli is bold; perhaps she is the boldest writer that has ever lived. What she believes she says, with a brilliant fearlessness that sweeps aside petty argument in its giant's stride towards the goal she aims for. She will have no half-measures. Her works, gathered together under one vast cover, might fitly be printed and published as an amplified edition of the Decalogue.

It is small wonder, then, that she has not earned the approbation of those critics who are unable to grasp the stupendous nature of her programme; they, having always held by certain canons, and finding those canons brusquely disregarded, retort with wholesale condemnation of matters that they deem literary heterodoxy, but whose sterling simplicity is in reality altogether beyond their ken. Fortunately, their words have failed to frighten off the public, which, ever loyal to one fighting for the right, has supported and befriended Marie Corelli in her dauntless crusade against vice and unbelief.

Other writers have doubtless written in a somewhat similar strain, and it has not been their fault that the woman who forms the subject of this

biography has eclipsed all the worthy makers of such books who have preceded her. Power has been given her, and she has not proved false to her trust. Genius is Heaven-sent, to be used or abused according to the will of its possessor; let those so gifted beware lest they cast the pearls of their brain before swine, for of a surety there will come a day of reckoning when every genius, as well as every other man, shall be called upon to give an account of his stewardship.

Unlike the majority of her contemporaries, Marie Corelli does not subsist on a single "big hit." She is a twelve-book rather than a one-book woman.

Sorrows of Satan," being now in its thirty-seventh edition; "The Mighty Atom," of which nearly a hundred thousand copies have been sold, is regarded by the public with singular affection, many children, as Mr. Arthur Lawrence has told us in *The Strand Magazine*, sending Miss Corelli "all sorts of loving and kindly greetings" as a token of their sympathy with little Lionel and Jessamine. The turbulent and stormy progress of "A Romance of Two Worlds" through the sea of criticism has made this book more familiar to the ear than some of its successors, though its sale has not equalled that of half a dozen of its fellow-works.

Miss Corelli's average book is about as long as two novels of the ordinary six-shilling size put together; but she has published some comparatively short stories—notably "Boy," "Ziska," and "The Mighty Atom," as well as some brochures, to wit "Jane," a society sketch "Cameos," and her tribute to the virtues of "Victoria the Good." "Boy," though published about the time that "The Master Christian" appeared, was accorded the heartiest of welcomes, being now in its forty-sixth thousand.

In days to come "The Master Christian" and "The Sorrows of Satan" will, we venture to predict, be sufficient alone to preserve their author's fame; and, for those who love a love-story,

"Thelma" will constitute a perpetual monument to its creator's memory.

Owing to the unique and unclassifiable nature of her productions, it is impossible to award Miss Corelli a definite place in the world of letters. It is under any circumstances a thankless task to arrange writers as one would arrange boys in a class—according to merit. There are the poets, the historians, the novelists, the humorists, and—the critics. Marie Corelli occupies a peculiarly isolated position. A novelist she is, in the main, and yet hardly a novelist according to cut-and-dried formulas; she is, unquestionably, a poet, for there

CHAPTER II

MARIE CORELLI'S CHILDHOOD — EARLY INFLUENCES—LITERARY BEGINNINGS—THE MACKAYS—FATHER AND SON

IN explanation of an unannounced and unexpected afternoon visit in 1890, Mr. W. E. Gladstone said, "I came because I was curious to see for myself the personality of a young woman who could write so courageously and well, and in whose work I recognise a power working for good, and eminently calculated to sway the thoughts of the people."

Such were the veteran statesman's words—well remembered by a friend of the novelist's who was present at that eventful meeting.

This young woman was Marie Corelli, the novelist, whom so many lesser men have abused because, unlike Gladstone, they have not studied her work, or have done so only with the determination to find fault.

The baby girl for whom so distinguished a career was destined, was adopted, when but three months old, by Dr. Charles Mackay, that excellent

journalist, poet, song-writer, and author. The love between Dr. Mackay and his adopted daughter was one of the closest and most sweet of domestic experiences. When reverses and suffering came to the man of letters, his joy and consolation was in the careful training of the much-loved little girl, and in his closing years he had the satisfaction of knowing that she had fulfilled his hopes and achieved success.

To the high character of Dr. Charles Mackay must be attributed the chief influence in the formation of the child's ideas; a glance, therefore, at the career of that gentleman cannot fail to be of interest. A native of Perth, Charles Mackay was

Argus. He was married in 1831, and by his first wife had three sons—Charles, Robert, and George Eric, and also a daughter, who died when she was twenty-two years of age. Of the sons, Charles is still living, being resident in America with his wife and family. Robert is dead, but is survived by a son and a daughter. Of George Eric Mackay, the second of the three sons, more will be told anon.

During Charles Dickens's brief editorship of the London *Daily News*, a number of verses by Mackay were published in that newspaper, and attracted much notice and praise. They were subsequently re-published in a volume as "Voices from the Crowd." A selection of these verses was set to music, and quickly caught the ear of the people, "The Good Time Coming" reaching a circulation of well-nigh half a million.

In 1848 Mr. Mackay became a member of the staff of *The Illustrated London News*, and in 1852 was appointed editor of that journal. Here, through the enterprise of Mr. Ingram, the song-writing capacities of Mr. Mackay were put to good use, and a number of musical supplements of *The Illustrated London News* were produced. "Songs for Music" afterwards appeared as a volume in 1856. The pieces included such prime favourites as "Cheer, Boys, Cheer!" "To the West! To

the West!" "Tubal Cain," "There's a Land, a dear Land," and "England over All." Set to the taking melodies of Henry Russell and others, these songs, it may truly be said, have been sung the world over, wherever the English language is spoken.

Mackay severed his connection with *The Illustrated London News* in 1859, and in the following year started *The London Review*, which did not succeed. Failure was the fate, too, of another periodical, *Robin Goodfellow*, founded by him in 1861. During the American Civil War, Mackay was the special correspondent of the *New York Times*.

In addition to writing many volumes of songs and ballads himself, it should be mentioned that Mackay compiled the well-known "A Thousand and One Gems of English Poetry."

From the year 1870 he engaged in little regular work, though he undertook interesting and valuable researches into Celtic philology. His closing years were—through ill-health and age—a period of financial reverses, but the gloom was brightened by the presence of the pet child of his adoption. He worked on till the last, being engaged during the very week of his death in writing two articles, one for *Blackwood's Magazine*, the other for *The Nineteenth Century*.

When his adopted daughter's somewhat brief schooldays were over, she returned home well fitted to assist Dr. Mackay in his literary work. She was already on familiar terms with his study and his books. A good many of the baby days were spent in the Doctor's study, and as an infant there were evidences that the mind of the little one was of a thoughtful and inquiring bent. She was considered almost too inquiring by those governesses who guided her earliest lessons, religious subjects always having a peculiar attraction for her. "Little girls must be good and try to please God," one governess impressed upon her; and the child's wondering

reply was: "Why, of course; everybody and everything must try to please God, else where would be the use of living at all?"

Babies—when they are good—always seem somewhat akin to angels, and the "Rosebud"—as Mackay called his adopted girl—always had a perfect belief not only in their existence, but in their near presence. The poet especially encouraged her faith in them. The "Rosebud" always believed angels were in her bedroom at night, and on her once saying that she could not see the angel (whom she fully expected) in her room, the Doctor answered, "Never mind, dearie! It is there, you may be sure; and if you will behave just as if you saw

known many men of light and leading in his day, and to the little girl who played in his study he delighted to recount reminiscences of them. Through him she learned to love some of his old friends as if she had known them personally.

Those were days that had much to do with the moulding of the character of the future novelist. There were no child playmates for little Marie, and the naturally studious bent of her mind was greatly affected by her environment. It gave her thought and wisdom beyond her years. This absence of child companions may or may not be advantageous; it all depends upon the circumstances. Victoria, who became Queen of England, had no child companions, and often in later years dwelt upon the fact with regret. Yet who would say they would have had any alteration in the character and doings of our late sovereign? The loss to a child of that child companionship which most enjoy may be very great; but there are compensations.

Those who have studied the productions of Marie Corelli with understanding of the spirit which has animated her work would not, we think, wish that anything should have been different. As to the reading of her early years, it was quite exceptional, as reading with children goes. She not only heard of the sayings and doings of Dickens, Thackeray, Jerrold, and others, but had read many

of their works before she was ten; had not only read, but understood a great deal of them, having a loving tutor to make matters easy for her. She took great interest in histories of times and peoples, and learned to sympathise with the workers. Dr. Mackay's poems were all familiar to her. So were the works of Shakespeare and Scott and Keats. Poetry was one of her chief delights, while instrumental music appealed to her as did the rhythm of song. The Bible, and especially the New Testament, was always her greatest friend in the world of books. And so, when it was deemed well to send her away for more systematic educational training than that of the sweet home life, it was

A great happiness which the convent provided was a grand organ in the chapel. At this, when schoolfellows were indulging in croquet, tennis, and other games, the young girl would sit, sometimes for hours at a time, playing religious songs and improvising harmonies. In several of the novels that were written in after years there are references to the organ and its soothing influences. Miss Corelli possesses remarkable musical talents, this power of improvisation amongst them, and her intimate friends to-day often have the pleasure of listening to her performances. Dr. Mackay had recognised that her musical ability was of exceptional order, and, as his financial losses had been such that he was aware he would not be able to provide for his adopted daughter, he determined that she should endeavour to win her way in the musical profession.

With this object in view the convent training was specially devoted to the development of her music, and with such thorough care were her studies conducted, that she still retains the skill then acquired upon organ, piano, and mandolin, and her voice is both sweet and powerful.

Both as instrumentalist and vocalist Miss Corelli could have been sure of a large measure of success. Principally she loves the old English and Scotch ballads; listening to her as she sings such songs

to her own accompaniment in her dainty drawing-room at Mason Croft, it is pleasant to observe how very feminine she is, how paramount is the Woman in her nature.

That the young girl was ambitious goes without saying. During her holidays from school, she wrote the score of an opera, which was called *Ginevra Da Siena.* About the same time she produced numerous verses and short poems which brought high praise from that competent judge, Dr. Mackay. Moreover, she wrote in her very young days three sonnets on Shakespearian plays, these being approved, praised, and published by

reading, playing, or singing to him, conversing with him, and cheering him in the illness that was upon him. The other half of the day was passed at her desk, and literature finally claimed all her working hours. The first story she wrote was returned to her. It seemed she was to traverse no path of roses to fame and fortune. Though occupied with minor literary matters she was turning over in her mind the outlines of a singular story suggested by the thoughts or fancies or dreams of that period when her health broke down, and during which, whilst health was being restored, there was little to do save keep quiet and meditate. The result was the formation of the plot of "A Romance of Two Worlds." These early years, by the way, up to 1885, were spent in a country cottage; then Dr. Mackay removed to London, and took a house in Kensington. "A Romance of Two Worlds" was published in 1886.

Miss Corelli's sole companion after her convent school-life, with the exception of Dr. Charles Mackay, was her devoted friend, Miss Bertha Vyver, daughter of the Countess Vyver, a not unimportant personage at the court of Napoleon III. The friendship between Miss Vyver and Miss Corelli has always been of the closest description. Since Dr. Charles Mackay welcomed Miss Vyver as his "second daughter," they have never been

separated. In all her daily life, not least the nursing of Dr. Mackay through his long illness, Miss Vyver has been by her side helping her in home difficulties and trials as help can only be given by one with whom there is perfect sympathy. Miss Vyver has seen every detail of all the work the novelist has done, and to-day the friendship between the two is closer and dearer than ever for the years that have passed, and the sorrows and joys that have been borne in company.

George Eric Mackay, Dr. Mackay's second son, had been a wanderer on the Continent for many years. Born in London in 1835, and

actor, and Eric found the work too severe. The plodding labours of the beginner by no means suited one who was not fitted by nature for drudgery or slow progress.

He had a good voice, and the next profession to which he turned his attention was operatic singing. For this again he had a not unpromising equipment, and his father determined to send him to Italy for the purpose of studying music there under good masters. No progress, however, was made with the musical studies, though the people and the conditions of existence in Italy appealed strongly to him, and he made Italy his home for many years.

During the first portion of his sojourn abroad he received a liberal allowance from his father, and was at other times indebted to him for considerable financial help. He was, like the Doctor, a master of European languages, and this knowledge enabled him to earn a precarious livelihood as a teacher of French and English. The income thus derived was added to by correspondence for newspapers.

Dr. Mackay gave his son many valuable introductions, and he thus became acquainted with Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton (to whom he subsequently dedicated a book of poems), Sir Richard Burton, and Sir William Perry, the British Consul at

Venice. All three became interested in him, and were frequently of assistance to him.

He found it impossible, however, to settle down. He stayed nowhere very long. Rome and Venice saw more of him than other cities. He wrote verses, and some were, under the title of "Songs of Love and Death," collected in a volume and published by Messrs. Chapman & Hall in 1864. This was the volume which was dedicated to Sir E. Bulwer Lytton. He was not encouraged by the financial results of his work. Poetry, in fact, does not pay, and the public at the time gave his verses but a chilly greeting. His poetic ardour somewhat damped by this treatment, he left the lyrical muse

handy guide-book to Venice. Nothing paid. The result was that he left Italy, after living there for twenty years, poorer than he went, which literally meant that he came back penniless. Broken financially, and in spirit, he returned to his father.

To the young girl Marie, whose life had hitherto been so exceptionally quiet, there was almost a romantic interest in this sudden arrival of the middle-aged man who, she was informed, was her step-brother, and she made much of him. Moreover, Dr. Mackay was seriously disappointed at the failure of his son to make a career, and at his position —without income or apparent hope of earning one ; and it was evident to Marie that it would afford her step-father the keenest pleasure if George Eric should, after all, achieve success.

The circumstances of her untiring efforts to bring him into notice are known only to a few, though misunderstood by many.

In the first place, her principal aim was to relieve her stepfather from the burden of his son's maintenance. In the second, she sought to rouse and inspire that son to obtain for himself a high position in literature. She spared no pains to attain these two objects, and all her first small earnings went in assisting him. She was at this time still continuing her musical studies, and very often went

to hear Sarasate. The large sums of money earned by this eminent artist first suggested an idea to George Eric of learning the violin, and, though late in life to begin, he resolved to study the instrument. His musical training in Italy must have been very ineffectual, as he had to learn his notes. He wished, however, for a good instrument, and his step-sister secured a "Guarnerius" model from Chappell, which she paid for by instalments and presented to him. It may be added that he never made way with it, but it was useful in providing the title of his best-known work.

have found a place in her books. A strong poetical tendency is evident throughout all her books, and is particularly prominent in "Ardath," a great portion of which is almost as much poetry as prose. Two letters, written by Eric Mackay at this time, and now preserved in Miss Corelli's autograph album, are particularly interesting. One ran:

"I am happier than I have been since boyhood, for I have a little sister again, and that little sister—the best and brightest in the world—does everything for me. But how far short of your ambition for me must I fall!—for you have already done so much in your short life—you, a child, and I, alas! a man growing old."

And in another he said:

"I must thank you for sending me the little Keats volume. Curiously enough, I never read his poems at all before. Browning I can't stand, but if you like him I must read him. You seem to live in an atmosphere of poetry, but pray be careful and do not study too hard."

"Love-Letters of a Violinist" at last made Eric Mackay famous. The book was published in 1885, and it was Marie Corelli who arranged for its production. She had fully convinced herself of the beauty of the poems, and she determined that they should be published as became what she

regarded as their great value. She corrected the proofs of the poems, selected the binding, and saw to every detail of the book. The poems were published anonymously, and at once became the talk not only of England, but of America. There was much speculation as to the authorship. Eric Mackay entered fully into the humour of the thing, and made numerous suggestions to his acquaintances as to the probable writer, even putting forth the hint that the late Duke of Edinburgh, an able violinist, might have written them. He must have chuckled hugely at the discussions about this anonymous author; and the whole story was often talked about among his friends. Miss Corelli

published works, issued in 1864, 1871, and 1880. Each "Love-Letter" (and there are twelve of them) is in twenty stanzas—each stanza contains six lines. Antonio Gallenga of *The Times* declared the poems to be as regular and symmetrical as Dante's "Comedy," with as stately and solemn, ay, and as arduous a measure! . . . "There are marvellous powers in this poet-violinist. Petrarch himself has not so many changes for his conjugation of the verb 'to love.'" The latter is what may be called, to quote a phrase recently used in a well-known newspaper, a "quotation from an hitherto unpublished review," because the late Antonio Gallenga wrote a review, at the request of Miss Corelli (whom he had known since her childhood), of the "Love-Letters," but *The Times* refused it, and he sent Miss Corelli the original manuscript, from which she quoted excerpts in her introduction to the "Love-Letters."

A lengthy review entitled "A New Love-Poet" appeared in *London Society* under the name of "W. Stanislas Leslie," no other than Marie Corelli herself. For the rest, all the critics fell foul of the book and "slated" the author unmercifully.

Some of the reviewers, notwithstanding the mystery they made of it, knew all about the authorship. Miss Corelli gave the news to the world in an anonymous letter to the *New York*

Independent, which was the first journal to reveal the identity of the writer of the poems. It published a brief statement to the effect that the author was simply a gentleman of good position, the descendant of a distinguished and very ancient family, George Eric Mackay. . . . "He will undoubtedly," it was added, "be numbered with the choice few whose names are destined to live by the side of poets such as Keats, whom, as far as careful work, delicate feeling, and fiery tenderness go, Eric Mackay may be said to resemble."

Swinburne, about whom Marie Corelli was to write so strongly in "The Sorrows of Satan," the poet-violinist thus addressed:

There are scores of passages like these. The great gifts displayed in the volume certainly afforded some justification a few years afterwards for the strenuous efforts which Marie Corelli made to get her step-brother appointed Poet Laureate.

The "Love-Letters of a Violinist," great as was their success as poems, did not prove lucrative. Miss Corelli had provided for the first issue; afterwards Mr. Eric Mackay made a free gift of the book to the publishers of the "Canterbury Poets" series. The sales have since been considerable, but the arrangement made by Mr. Mackay was one which, of course, did not benefit him financially.

Shortly after the publication of the "Love-Letters of a Violinist," there were serious developments in Dr. Charles Mackay's illness. He was stricken down with paralysis, and the pinch of poverty was being felt, for there was very little coming into the home. Marie Corelli had now a great responsibility upon her young shoulders. The completion of her musical training it was impossible to afford. What to do? She determined to try to write a novel. More articles and essays were contributed anonymously to newspapers and magazines; and, meanwhile, the plan of "A Romance of Two Worlds" had been prepared and the book was being written, and finally it was

submitted to and accepted by a great publisher, who came to see, and stared with amazement at, the very young lady to whom he was introduced as the author. Yet so it was, and the story of the publication and reception of the book is instructive.

CHAPTER III

"A ROMANCE OF TWO WORLDS"

IN ninety-nine cases out of a hundred an author's first long manuscript is a poor and immature thing, which, owing to its inflammatory nature, were best devoted to fire-lighting purposes. But the aspiring scribbler, not being—from this point of view, at any rate—a utilitarian in his views, would as lief lose his right hand as behold his darling pages being put to the base wooing of wood and coals. Instead, he spends several pounds on having it typewritten, and then sends it forth upon its travels round the publishing houses. It comes back to him with exasperating regularity, until the author, at last realising that his book does not appeal to publishers' readers quite as vividly as it does to its creator, either (if he be wise) consigns it to the dust-bin, or (if he be unwise) pays one of the shark publishing firms to bring it out. Did he know that the wily fellows he entrusts his work to simply print enough copies for review purposes and a few more to put on their shelves,

charging him the while for a whole edition, he would not part with his good money so readily! As it is, he has the satisfaction of seeing his story between covers, of sending it to his friends, of beholding his name in the "Books Received" corner of the daily papers, of knowing for certain that a copy, wherever else it may not be found, will always be supplied to students of fiction at the British Museum; and that is all.

It is needless to say that this was not the course of procedure adopted by Miss Marie Corelli. She wrote voluminously in her school-days, and was as successful as most young girls are when they are serving their literary apprenticeship. She scribbled

be fairly applicable to the average girl-author, Miss Corelli denies that the writing of "A Romance of Two Worlds" ever caused *her* to become "æsthetically cadaverous." Her methodical habits may account for the fact that, in spite of much desk toil and hard thinking, she has always managed to keep a well-balanced mind *in corpore sano.*

"I write every day from ten in the morning till two in the afternoon, alone and undisturbed. . . . I generally scribble off the first rough draft of a story very rapidly in pencil; then I copy it out in pen and ink, chapter by chapter, with fastidious care, not only because I like a neat manuscript, but because I think everything that is worth doing at all is worth doing well. . . . I find, too, that in the gradual process of copying by hand, the original draft, like a painter's first sketch, gets improved and enlarged."

The "Romance," then, according to this salubrious programme, entered quietly into a state of being. Miss Corelli was doubtful whether it would ever find a publisher: her first notion was to offer it to Arrowsmith, as a railway-stall novelette. Possibly the success of "Called Back" suggested the Bristol publisher, the title she first fixed upon, "Lifted Up," being eminently suggestive of a shilling series. However, the manuscript never went westwards—a matter which good Mr. Arrow-

smith has excellent cause to regret—for, in the interim, as a kind of test of its merit or demerit, Miss Corelli sent it to Bentley's. The "readers" attached to that house advised its summary rejection. Moved by curiosity to inspect a work which his several advisers took the trouble to condemn in such singularly adverse terms, Mr. George Bentley decided to read the MS. himself, and the consequence of his unprejudiced and impartial inspection was approval and acceptance.

Letters were exchanged, terms proposed and agreed upon. "I am glad that all is arranged," wrote Mr. Bentley; "nothing now remains but to try and make a success of your first venture. The

pen, all the more readily, too, because I see you love wholesome thought, and will not lend yourself to corrupt and debase the English mind. . . . I have no greater pleasure than to bring to light a bright writer like yourself. After all, the Brightness must be in the author, and so the sole praise is to her."

After his first visit to Miss Corelli, in July of that year, Mr. Bentley wrote as follows: "The afternoon remains with me as a pleasant memory. I am so glad to have seen you. I little expected to see so young a person as the authoress of works involving in their creation faculties which at your age are mostly not sufficiently developed for such works."

Miss Corelli was allowed to retain her copyright, a fact which, though regarded by her as of slight import at the time, has since proved of some pecuniary advantage, seeing that the "Romance" is now in its twentieth edition.

The wise old publisher saw nothing attractive, explanatory, or saleable in such a name as "Lifted Up," so a new title was asked for. Scott once said there was nothing in a name, and certainly it did not matter what such a magician as he was called a book any more than it matters what name any firmly established author fixes upon; but a new writer can seldom afford to despise the

gentle art of alliteration or the appellation which appeals to the eye, ear, and imagination.

Both Dr. Charles Mackay and his son George Eric were appealed to by the young beginner in that literary career to which they were both accustomed. Both demanded a reading of the MS. that they might be guided by its contents as to the title. But Marie refused to show her manuscript to any one. She told her step-father that he would only "laugh at her silly fancies." She would not let George Eric read it, because she wanted to surprise him by quoting some of his poetry in the book from the "Love-Letters of a Violinist," which title she, by-the-bye, had suggested. She said her

be uninteresting, at this distance of time, to quote the criticism which appeared in a leading journal, as it is a very fair sample of the rest :

"Miss Corelli would have been better advised had she embodied her ridiculous ideas in a sixpenny pamphlet. The names of Heliobas and Zara are alone sufficient indications of the dulness of this book."

Less could hardly have been said. Had the paper been a provincial weekly, and the writer a junior reporter to whom the book had been flung with a curt editorial order to "write a par about that," the review could not have been more innocent of any attempt at criticism. It is highly apparent that the critic in question was not employed on the elbow-jogging terms known as "on space."

As for the names, it would have been equally absurd to call a Chaldæan—descended directly from one of the "wise men of the East"—and his sister, by the Anglo-Saxon Jack and Jill; or, indeed, to apply to them European nomenclature of any description. The "Romance," to quote its writer's own description, was meant to be "the simply-worded narration of a singular psychical experience, and included certain theories on religion which I, personally speaking, accept and believe."

What name, then, would this reviewer have chosen for the electric healer who is the principal

male character in the work? Although he lived in Paris, it would hardly have been fair to christen him Alphonse, a name, by the way, strongly suggestive of a French valet. Clearly the critic here was unreasonable as well as idle.

With regard to the allegation as to dulness, we imagine that Miss Corelli's most bitter detractors have never accused her of this most unpardonable crime in a maker of books. Her imagination may take flights exasperating in their audacity to the stay-at-home mind of Wellington Street; she may occasionally state her opinions a thought too didactically for people who are themselves opinionated; when she cries shame on vice and

you can't praise me, *slate* me," said an author once to an editor; and he spoke sagely. Luke-warm reviews are the worst enemies a writer can have; favourable reviews impress a certain number of book-buyers, book-sellers and librarians, but bitingly hostile criticisms—tinged, if possible, with personal spite—are frequently quite as helpful as columns of eulogy.

In the case of "A Romance of Two Worlds," the Press did not help one way or the other, however. The public discovered the book for themselves, and letters concerning its theories began to pour in from strangers in all parts of the United Kingdom. At the end of its first twelve months' run, Mr. Bentley brought it out in one volume in his "Favourite" series. Then it started off round the world at full gallop.

It was, as Miss Corelli has already related in a very frank magazine article, a most undoubted success from the moment Bentley's laid it on their counter. It was "pirated" in America; chosen out and liberally paid for by Baron Tauchnitz for the popular and convenient little Tauchnitz series; and translated into various Continental languages. A gigantic amount of correspondence flowed in upon the authoress from India, Africa, Australia and America; and it may be added that the more recent editions of the

"Romance" have contained very representative excerpts from this epistolary bombardment. One man wrote saying that the book had saved him from committing suicide; another that it had called a halt on his previous driftings towards Agnosticism; others that the book had exercised a comforting and generally beneficent influence over them. To quote only one correspondent: "I felt a better woman for the reading of it twice; and I know others, too, who are higher and better women for such noble thoughts and teaching."

Now, if a book—however one may object to or disagree with the writer's convictions—has an undoubted influence for good; if it drives from

of Marie Corelli during the long winter evenings, passing on from book to book — from the "Romance" to "Vendetta," thence to "Thelma," "Ardath," "Wormwood," "The Soul of Lilith," and so on—in the order in which they were written. For the idle and listless, for the frivolous, for the irreligious, for the purse-proud, for the down-hearted and distressed, she will prove a veritable "cure," for she is at once a moralist and a tonic. And whereas she is a literary sermon in herself to those who listen to other preachers without profit, so will she prove a profitable and restorative change of air to the busy, the honestly prosperous, the "godly, righteous, and sober" of her students. She is for all, and, where funds are scarce and shillings consequently precious, Free Libraries bring her within reach of everybody.

At a time when our leading dramatists and novelists drag their art in the mud for the sake of the lucre that may be found down there in plenty, it is refreshing and hope-inspiring to find that the writer with the largest public in the world, whose work has penetrated to every country and is thus not restricted to Anglo-Saxondom any more than a new type of rifle is, has ranged herself on the side of *Right*! Thus, owing to the wide-spread interest in her work, she is enabled to preach the gospel of her beliefs in all corners

of the globe—this, too, in spite of the fact that she is comparatively a new-comer in literature.

"My appeal for a hearing," wrote Miss Corelli, when describing, in the pages of the *Idler*, the appearance of her first book, "was first made to the great public, and the public responded; moreover, they do still respond with so much heartiness and goodwill, that I should be the most ungrateful scribbler that ever scribbled if I did not (despite Press 'drubbings' and the amusing total ignoring of my very existence by certain cliquey literary magazines) take up my courage in both hands, as the French say, and march steadily onward to such

write on the subject. . . . But I distinctly wish it to be understood that I am neither a 'Spiritualist' nor a 'Theosophist' . . . I have no other supernatural belief than that which is taught by the Founder of our Faith. . . ."

The plot of the story with which Miss Corelli won her spurs is simple in the extreme. The plot, indeed, is a secondary matter, the main strength of the book being the Physical Electricity utilised by Heliobas—the medicine man of Chaldæan descent who has neither diploma nor license—in his cure of the young improvisatrice whose nerves have been shattered by over-devotion to musical study and whose vitality has been reduced to an alarmingly low ebb by her inability to recuperate, even in the soothing climate of the Riviera. An artist who has been saved from self-destruction and restored to absolute health by Heliobas, advises her to seek out this "Dr. Casimir" (as Heliobas is called in Paris) and put herself in his hands. This she does, with astounding results, for, from a miserable, woe-begone creature, all "palpitations and headaches and stupors," Casimir's potions and electrical remedies change her into an absolutely healthy woman, "plump and pink as a peach." In Casimir's house lives the physician's sister, Zara, who, by means of the same medical and electrical properties, retains, at thirty-eight, the complexion and supple

health of a girl of seventeen, being ever "as fresh and lovely as a summer morning." During her stay with him, Heliobas expounds his "Electric Creed" to the young musician, and by her own wish, and by means of his extraordinary hypnotic powers—combined with a fluid preparation which he causes her to take—throws her into a trance in the course of which "strange departure" her soul is temporarily separated from her body and floats from the earth to other spheres. Guided by the spirit Azùl, it wanders to the "Centre of the Universe," and, after being permitted to gaze upon the wonders and glories of the supernatural, returns to earth and once more takes its place in the work-

is killed by a flash of lightning. After attending the burial of his sister in Père-la-Chaise, Heliobas takes leave of his patient, and proceeds to Egypt to accustom himself to the solitude to which his sister's death has condemned him. The reader is given to understand, however, that Heliobas and the young musician meet again later on under more cheerful conditions.

Such is a mere outline of this popular story, which is told throughout with admirable restraint and dignity, the language being moderate, and the arguments pithily expressed. The half-dozen minor characters are touched in with all the skill of an experienced novelist; and yet, when Miss Corelli set to work on this "Romance," she was younger than her heroine is represented to be.

The actual penmanship occasioned by the writing of the book must have been as nothing compared with the very arduous thought and study connected with the mental generation of the views held by Heliobas and his fellow-believers. That the theories here exploited are well worth the consideration of all thoughtful persons, is proved by the intense interest the book has aroused in so many widely different and widely separated areas of civilisation.

It ought to be remembered, too, that, at the time the "Romance" was published, the wonders of the

X rays had not been demonstrated, nor had wireless telegraphy become a *fait accompli*. Yet these were distinctly foretold in Marie Corelli's first book, as also the possible wonders yet to be proved in certain new scientific theories of Sound and Colour. It may instruct many to know that the theory of God's " Central World " with which all the universe moves, is a part of the authoress's own implicit belief in a future state of being.

CHAPTER IV

"VENDETTA" AND "THELMA"

TO Miss Corelli's host of admirers the story of "Vendetta" must be so familiar as to render a lengthy repetition of it unnecessary. "Vendetta" is, briefly, an exposition—in the form of a novel—on marital infidelity.

In August, 1886, before the book was published, Mr. Bentley wrote: "May I tell you that I have been again looking into 'Vendetta,' and I venture to prophesy a success? It is a powerful story, and a great stride forward on the first book . . . it marches on to its awful finale with the grimness of a Greek play."

That Mr. Bentley's prophecy was fulfilled is clearly indicated in a letter addressed by him to the authoress on October 22nd of the same year: "I have very great pleasure in sending the enclosed, because I should have been mortified beyond expression if the public had not responded to the marked power of your story. I believe you will come now steadily to the front, and I am very

curious to read your new story. . . ." "I shall yield to no reader of your works," he again wrote, some time afterwards, "in a very high opinion of such scenes as the supper scene in 'Vendetta'—as good as if Bulwer had written it. . . ."

As the preface to "Vendetta" tells us, the book's chief incidents are founded on an actual and fatal blunder which was committed in Naples during the cholera visitation of 1884. "Nothing," says the authoress, "is more strange than truth;—nothing, at times, more terrible!" "Vendetta" is, then, practically, a true story, and certainly a very terrible one, of a Neapolitan nobleman who, being

periences—retraced his steps to his house, only to find his most familiar friend consoling his supposed widow for the loss of her husband in a manner which plainly gave evidence that the amours of the guilty couple were by no means of recent origin. Fired by a desire for revenge, and materially assisted by the bandits' secret hoard, the wronged nobleman, instead of making known his resurrection to his wife or anybody else, quitted Naples for a while. On his reappearance, six months later—well-disguised by his white hair and a pair of smoked spectacles—he represented himself to be an elderly and wealthy Italian noble, lately returned from a long but voluntary exile from his native land. Playing his *rôle* to perfection, he soon succeeded in striking up a friendship with his wife and her lover, his ire increasing as he found that they were both supremely indifferent to the memory of the man whom they imagined to be lying in the tomb of his ancestors.

From this point the reader is compelled to pass rapidly from chapter to chapter in following out the injured husband's scheme of retaliation. With remarkable ingenuity the novelist depicts the manner in which the elderly nobleman, making free use of his abundant means, wormed himself into the confidence of his supposed widow as well as his traitorous friend, how he finally manœuvred the

latter into a duel which proved fatal to the doer of evil, and the former into a second marriage with himself. The curtain falls on a midnight adventure which proved fatal to the twice-wed wife.

Miss Corelli appears to be thoroughly at home at Naples and among the Neapolitans. Her descriptions of the place and its people are admirable. She is well-versed in the art of painting a pretty picture, only, for the purposes of her plot, to destroy it with a great ugly dab across the smiling canvas. For the story opens as daintily as you please. Left, while still a youth, an ample fortune, Count Fabio Romani dwelt "in a miniature

had passed since his accession to the title, Fate cast in his way a face "of rose-tinted, child-like loveliness," it dazzled him. And "of course I married her."

The fair canvas is not blurred over too soon, for following the marriage come several years of bliss undimmed by any cloud. The false friend's infidelity remains unexposed and all is peace at the Villa Romani, the husband doting and believing himself to be doted upon, and a girl-babe, "fair as one of the white anemones" which abounded in the woods surrounding the home, arriving to add pride to his love. Then the bolt falls. The cholera descends upon Naples, and with inexorable clutch claims victim after victim.

Count Fabio, strolling down to the harbour one hot early morn, comes upon a lad stricken by the dread malady, and tends him. Within an hour he is himself convulsed with excruciating agony, and, whilst stretched on a bench in a humble restaurant, loses consciousness—to awake in his coffin.

The horrors of such a restoration to life are depicted with extraordinary force, and with equal power is described the revulsion of feeling—the intoxicating delight—experienced by the unfortunate man as, having regained his liberty, he stands rejoicing in the morning light and listens to the song of a boat-

man who is plying his oars on the smooth surface of the Bay. It was a happy fancy to set down the words of the sailor's carol—a gentle touch of human gladness ere the demon of vengeance whispers "Vendetta!"

With astonishing cleverness the outraged husband maps out his plan of requital; his patience, his self-control, his constant alertness are described by himself—the story is told in the first person—with a deliberation that is almost diabolical in its cold-blooded intensity.

Count Fabio scorns the idea of divorce or even an ordinary duel—his revenge must partake of nothing so prosaic as an action at law or ten

of fair play, the idea being that one person has to bring about the death of another, by means fair or foul. The count found it necessary to his programme to make the duel appear a perfectly fair one, but as a matter of fact he never for a moment, owing to the precautions he took, had any misgivings as to which combatant would prove successful.

In the event of this book being dramatised, the most thrilling situation will undoubtedly be pronounced the scene in the vault when Fabio, having remarried his wife, takes her to what he describes as the house where he keeps his treasure. When retreat is impossible the guilty woman discovers that he has lured her into the Romani mausoleum. In this noisome place of sepulture, amidst the bones of bygone Counts Romani, he discloses his identity, and points to his own coffin, broken asunder—a ghastly proof of the fact that his story is true. This is his night of triumph: here ends his revenge. "Trick for trick, comedy for comedy." His once familiar friend lies dead in a grave distant but a few yards from the vault in which, held fast in a ruthless snare, stands the wife whose love had strayed from her husband to the silent one yonder.

Her first fright over, she shows resource even in these dire straits: she flies, but a locked gate

bars her exit, and then she almost succeeds in stabbing her gaoler. But nothing avails against his vigilance and iron strength, and her terrible surroundings turn her brain. Mad, she breaks into song—an old melody that at last, when too late, touches the heart of her husband, and he resolves to remove her from the charnel-house. But ere his new-found compassion can take action, while she is crooning over the bandits' hoard of jewels and decking her fair arms and neck with blazing gems, a sudden upheaval of Nature, not uncommon in those parts, shakes a ponderous stone out of the vault's roof and silences her song for ever.

Miss Corelli's publisher was delighted with the manuscript. "I have read all," wrote Mr. Bentley, on March 22nd, 1887; "what a nuisance space is! Here are three hundred miles separating us, and I feel I could say what I have to say fifty times better by word of mouth than with this pen. . . . 'Thelma,' as long as it is Norwegian, is a lovely dream—a romance full of poetry and colour. 'Thelma' in London (I speak of the book) I cannot like. Of course the contrast, if not too deep, is effective. . . . How glad I was to get back to Norway! The death of Olaf is very picturesquely painted, and little Britta is a charming little brick." In a previous letter, written when he had perused up to "page 1017," he said: "The character of Sigurd I consider a most beautiful creation. I hardly like to write what I really think of it, since either it is of the very highest order, or I have no claim to critical ability of any sort. His whole career, his half-thought-out, half-uttered exclamations, the poetry of his thoughts, his passion so noble and so pitiful, the grand and highly dramatic close of his life, must give you a position which might be denied for 'Vendetta' as melodrama. Here there is nothing of that sort of life—here one is in the world which held Ariel. The Bonde I like much, and Lorimer. How necessary are some defects to a perfect

liking! How we are in touch with poor Humanity through its weak side! This is, I suppose, why we do not sympathise as we ought with Christ. We feel sad for ourselves, and I can only truly pity those who need it, the sort of cry in our hearts for the lost perfection. . . . I could write several sheets about the novel, but I forbear. Don't write too fast. *One who can write as well* as you can, can write better, and in the long run will stand better on financial grounds."

Here is advice from one possessing great experience and much worldly wisdom. How helpful such sound and friendly counsel proved to the young novelist can readily be imagined

Various passages in other letters testify to Mr. Bentley's genuine appreciation of the book. "A clever lady, a great friend of mine whose opinion I value, is charmed with 'Thelma.' This lady was a friend of Guizot, is a keen critic, and hates our modern novels." And again: "There is a rich imagery in 'Thelma,' which makes me believe you capable of becoming our first novelist, and there is a versatility which bodes well. . . . But God sends what is best for His children—may His best be for you!"

"Thelma" is, in truth, for some considerable way through its numerous pages, a very pretty story: by many readers, as has been said, it is counted Miss Corelli's best achievement, albeit the authoress, in her heart of hearts, sets "Ardath" above everything that has come from her pen.

"Thelma" is quaintly unorthodox from its very start, for the two principal characters meet each other in the unconventional manner so dear to the heart of the romance-lover. A wave-lapped beach, at midnight, in the Land of the Midnight Sun—a handsome English aristocrat—a wonderful maid, who can claim direct descent from the old Vikings—some slight assistance required in the launching of a boat—are not these particulars sufficient to whet the appetite for what is bound

to follow? Favoured by circumstances, this chance meeting ripens into a full-fledged friendship, whence to a wooing and a wedding is no far cry in the hands of a skilful novelist.

The main theme of the story, of course, is English society as viewed by a girl who, though naturally refined and carefully educated, is, as regards the world and its ways, a child. Thelma, having become Lady Bruce-Errington, is gradually introduced to her husband's social equals, the result being as diverting as it is pathetic, for she has to go through a process of disillusionment whereby she learns with no little pain that an invitation to dinner is not necessarily a genuine expression

able misery when the machinations of certain evilly-disposed persons lead her to believe that her husband has bestowed his affections upon a burlesque actress. So great is her selflessness that the poor girl makes excuses for her husband's (alleged) infidelity, and actually blames herself for not having proved sufficiently fascinating to keep him by her side. In bitter weather she quietly leaves London—bound for home. She crosses the rough seas in a cargo-boat, and arrives in Norway to find that her father is just dead. Her husband follows her by a perilous route, and, surviving the many dangers of the journey, gains her bedside in time to save her life and reason. And thereafter all is well.

In a book containing six hundred and fifteen closely-printed pages, there must of necessity be a long roll of characters. It is often the case that characters, increasing in number as a book progresses in the writing, demand more and more space for their exploitation. Hence such voluminous works as "Thelma." In the first part of the novel the persons introduced are mainly of the bachelor kind, and, though useful in filling chairs at the literary repast, are not absolutely necessary to the plot's working. In "The Land of Mockery"—Book II.—a new set of people is introduced, society people mostly, and their servants.

In Book III.—"The Land of the Long Shadow" —the reader is taken to Norway in the winter, the novelist appropriately and strikingly making Nature's moods harmonise with those of her pen-and-ink creations.

Miss Corelli lays on her colours with an unsparing brush—there is nothing half-and-half in her characterisation. There are four "principals" in this play. Lady Winsleigh, as opposed to Thelma, fills a *rôle* full of wrongful possibilities in that she portrays "a woman scorned," than whom, as we are asked to believe, Hell hath no fury whose malevolence is of a worse description. Sir Francis Lennox is, in wrong-doing, her masculine counter-

of her heart's choice. She is a human flower, well pictured by the lines from Rossetti quoted by the authoress :

"Sweet hands, sweet hair, sweet cheeks, sweet eyes, sweet mouth,
Each singly wooed and won!"

CHAPTER V

"ARDATH"—THE STORY OF A DEAD SELF—THE WONDERFUL CITY OF AL-KYRIS—THE MISSION OF THE BOOK

IN no work produced by her busy pen has Miss Corelli given such range to her imagination, to her love of the beautiful and fantastic, as in "Ardath." This, her fourth book, abounds

flowers, field and forest, golden sunshine and blue waters. She exhibits a passion for the bygone—in architecture and in man. In her interesting miscellany, "A Christmas Greeting," she reproves those who would take from the charming old-worldliness of Shakespeare's birthplace by erecting in Stratford-on-Avon ugly villas and shops suggestive of Clapham or Peckham Rye. She would—as we all would—have Stratford kept as much as possible like Stratford was when Shakespeare wandered by Avon's banks or brooded over the fire in his home near to the old Guild Church.

"Ardath" was written in a hot glow of inspiration. Its theme is drawn from the Book of Esdras, one of the apocryphal Jewish writings which, while not used for "establishment of doctrine," are held to be of value for historical purposes and for "instruction of manners." Like a constantly recurring refrain in a musical composition, the passage in Esdras chosen by the authoress for her text greets the reader ever and anon as he turns the pages: "*So I went my way into the Field which is called 'Ardath,' and sat among the flowers.*"

On this passage Miss Corelli built her romance, and so successfully did she work out her ideas that "Ardath" drew letters from all sorts and conditions of men—letters discussing the theories propounded in her writings, and asking for information and

advice of encyclopædic character. Amongst the correspondence were many flattering letters from men and women of light and leading, not only in England, but abroad. The novel under notice, which was issued in 1889, brought Miss Corelli a letter of praise from Lord Tennyson. The work was indeed so remarkable a piece of imaginative conception and picturesque writing that it appealed peculiarly to the Laureate's sense of the poetic and artistic.

Of the mission of the book, which was of serious character, we shall speak anon. "Ardath" is one of the author's finest efforts to further the cause of true religion. A strange outcome of the

a sub-title, "The Story of a Dead Self," and it is in the city of Al-Kyris that the peculiar "Dead Self" experience comes to Theos Alwyn, through whom Miss Corelli expounds lessons to all men —and women.

The story opens in the heart of the Caucasus mountains, where a wild storm is gathering, and there is an early example of the descriptive delights with which the book is adorned. Miss Corelli is unique, not alone in her imaginings and in her treatment of them, but, too, in her powerful pictures of scenery. Here,

"in the lonely Caucasus heights, drear shadows drooped and thickened above the Pass of Dariel—that terrific gorge which like a mere thread seems to hang between the toppling frost-bound heights above, and black abysmal depths below—clouds, fringed ominously with lurid green and white, drifted heavily yet swiftly across the jagged peaks where, looming largely out of the mist, the snow-capped crest of Mount Kazbek rose coldly white against the darkness of the threatening sky. . . . Night was approaching, though away to the west a broad gash of crimson, a seeming wound in the breast of heaven, showed where the sun had set an hour since. Now and again the rising wind moaned sobbingly through the tall and spectral pines that, with knotted roots fast clenched in the reluctant earth, clung tenaciously to their stony vantage ground; and mingling with its wailing murmur, there came a distant hoarse roaring as of tumbling torrents, while at far-off intervals could be heard the sweeping thud of an

avalanche slipping from point to point on its disastrous downward way. Through the wreathing vapours the steep, bare sides of the near mountains were pallidly visible, their icy pinnacles, like uplifted daggers, piercing with sharp glitter the density of the low-hanging haze, from which large drops of moisture began presently to ooze rather than fall. Gradually the wind increased, and soon with sudden fierce gusts shook the pine-trees into shuddering anxiety,—the red slit in the sky closed, and a gleam of forked lightning leaped athwart the driving darkness. An appalling crash of thunder followed almost instantaneously, its deep boom vibrating in sullenly grand echoes on all sides of the Pass, and then—with a swirling, hissing rush of rain—the unbound hurricane burst forth alive and furious. On, on!—splitting huge boughs and flinging them aside

of Wight, pondering, in his long island walks, on the strange romance of pre-Babylonian times set down by a woman who had won the whole-hearted approval of his great contemporary, William Gladstone.

Not unlike this majestic opening of "Ardath" are many of the poet's own sublime pen-pictures. A master of verse, standing high above all others of his time as well as above most who had preceded him, the warm encomiums that he deliberately awarded to Marie Corelli should surely silence the snarls of envious Grub Street.

But to our story. Within the Monastery of Lars, "far up among the crags crowning the ravine," are seen a group of monks whose intonations strangely stir a listener,—an Englishman,—Alwyn, whose musings on the reverential exercises of the monks indicate the religious purpose that underlies the story which follows. For Alwyn at the time is not only a poet, but egoist and agnostic. What sort of fellows are these monks, he muses,—fools or knaves? they must be one or the other, thinks he, else they would not thus chant praises "to a Deity of whose existence there is, and can be, no proof." He is none the less conscious that the ending of faith and the prevalence of what he regards as Truth, would be a dreary result, destroying the beauty of the Universe. With cold

and almost contemptuous feelings he watches the proceedings of these monks, and listens to the recital of their seven *Glorias* :

" Glory to God, the Most High, the Supreme and Eternal ! " And with one harmonious murmur of accord the brethren respond :

" Glory for ever and ever ! Amen ! "

Vespers over, the monks leave their chapel, and immediately the agnostic poet is face to face with one who is presumably chief of the Order—the monk who had recited the *Glorias*. And who, indeed, is he ? None other than the mystic scientist, the Heliobas of " A Romance of Two

from its house of clay and allow it an interval of freedom. Alwyn pleads—even demands—that Heliobas will exercise this power at once, but the monk, amazed and reproachful, declines.

"'To-night!—without faith, preparation or prayer,—you are willing to be tossed through the realms of space like a grain of dust in a whirling tempest? Beyond the glittering gyration of unnumbered stars—through the sword-like flash of streaming comets—through darkness—through light—through depths of profoundest silence—over heights of vibrating sound—you—*you* will dare to wander in these God-invested regions—you, a blasphemer and a doubter of God!'"

Stranger than many of the marvels of the book is the scene that follows. It is a contest of Will between Alwyn and Heliobas. The former, concentrating all the powers of his mind upon the effort, declares that Heliobas *shall* release his soul:

"He felt twice a man and more than half a God . . . what—what was that dazzling something in the air that flashed and whirled and shone like glittering wheels of golden flame? His lips parted—he stretched out his hands in the uncertain manner of a blind man feeling his way. 'Oh, God!—God!' he muttered, as though stricken by some sudden amazement—then, with a smothered gasping cry he staggered and fell heavily forward on the floor—insensible! . . ."

The soul of the poet had by a superhuman access

of will managed to break its bonds and escape elsewhere. "But whither? Into what vast realms of translucent light or drear shadow?" Unable to answer the question, the monk betakes himself to the monastery chapel, and prays in silence till the heavy night had passed and the storm "had slain itself with the sword of its own fury on the dark slopes of the Pass of Dariel."

Theos for a time lies as one dead. Anon he awakes, seats himself at a table, and writes. Sometimes he murmurs "Ardath," but he goes on writing for hours. Then Heliobas rejoins him. "I have been dreaming," Theos says. The monk points to the written manuscript as proof that the

wild despair he cried "Oh, God, where art Thou?" and heard a great rushing sound as of a strong wind beaten through with wings, while a voice, grand and sweet as a golden trumpet blown suddenly in the silence of night, answered, "*Here!—and Everywhere!*" And then all was brightness, a slanting stream of opaline radiance cleft the gloom, and Alwyn was uplifted by an invisible strength. And then he hears some one call him by name, "Theos, my Beloved!" and a woman of entrancing beauty appears, crowned with white flowers, and robed in a garb that seems spun from midsummer moonbeams; . . . a smiling maiden-sweetness in a paradise of glad sights and sounds.

And this being, bidding Alwyn return to his own star, further directs him to seek out the Field of Ardath, where she will meet him. And so they part.

Theos Alwyn awakens from his dream madly in love with this vision of loveliness, and determines, if a Field of Ardath there is, to go there and keep the appointment. Heliobas shows him where the Field of Ardath lies. It is mentioned in the Book of Esdras, in the Apocrypha, and is described as situated four miles west of the Babylonian ruins. Alwyn decides on journeying thither, first sending the poem he had written to his London friend, Francis Villiers, with the

request that as "Nourhàlma: A Love-Legend of the Past" it shall be published in the usual way.

By the waters of Babylon we next find Theos Alwyn, who is soon housed in the Hermitage, near Hillah, with one Elzear of Malyana, to whom Heliobas has supplied the traveller with a letter of introduction. So impatient is this lover to prove the truth or falsity of his mystic vision at Dariel, that, on the first night of his arrival at the Hermitage, he proceeds shortly before midnight to search for the Field of Ardath which was known to the Prophet Esdras. He sets forth, and the wondrous story of his experiences immediately commences. "Kyrie eleison! Christe eleison!

dew sparkled like brilliants, and whence puffs of perfume rose like incense swung at unseen altars. And here he finds, moving sedately along through the snow-white blossoms, a graceful girl. He no longer has eyes for the flower-transfiguration of the lately barren land. "My name is Edris; I came from a far, far country, Theos, a land where no love is wasted and no promise forgotten!" she tells him. More than that, she adds that she has waited and prayed for him through long bright æons of endless glory, and he recognises in Edris at last the angel of his vision. She upbraids him for his doubts and unhappiness, speaks slightingly of fame as a perishable diadem; and crying "O fair King Christ, Thou shalt prevail!" she leaves him, and as she goes Theos is told prayers are heard, and God's great patience never tires;—learn therefore "*from the perils of the past, the perils of the future.*" Alwyn, falling senseless, drifts into the dream wherein he is to learn the story of his new self.

The description of Theos's dream fills over fifteen score of pages. The reader is impelled on and on, finding in every step new subject for wonder. The city of Al-Kyris is a feast of scenic splendours, the skill of the writer providing fascinating word-pictures of incidents more strange than were ever imagined in an Arabian

Nights' Entertainment. And through all runs a steady and strong undercurrent made up of the solid lesson of the book, "*learn from the perils of the past, the perils of the future.*"

Theos Alwyn could not tell how long he slept on the Field of Ardath, for his awakening was confusing. He had a consciousness of his previous life, its conditions, his position, and opinions. All now was changed. He was before a gate leading into a walled city, the entrance to which consisted of huge massive portals apparently made of finely moulded brass, and embellished on either side by thick round stone towers from the summits of which red pennons drooped idly in the air. Through the

what was Ardath? Neither a country nor a city. And his dress!—he glanced at it, dismayed and appalled—he had not noticed it till now. It bore some resemblance to the costume of ancient Greece, and consisted of a white linen tunic and loose upper vest, both garments being kept in place by a belt of silver. From this belt depended a sheathed dagger. His feet were shod with sandals, his arms were bare to the shoulder and clasped at the upper part by two broad silver armlets richly chased. The men were for the most part arrayed like himself, though here and there he met some few whose garments were of soft silk, instead of linen, who wore gold belts in place of silver, and who carried their daggers in sheaths that were literally encrusted all over with flashing jewels.

"The costume of the women was composed of a straight clinging gown, slightly gathered at the throat and bound about the waist with a twisted girdle of silver, gold, and, in some cases, jewels; their arms, like those of the men, were bare; and their small delicate feet were protected by sandals fastened with crossed bands of ribbon coquettishly knotted. The arrangement of their hair was evidently a matter of personal taste, and not the slavish copying of any set fashion—some allowed it to hang in loosely flowing abundance over their shoulders; others had it closely braided or coiled carelessly in a thick, soft mass at the top of the head; but all without exception wore

white veils—veils long, transparent and filmy as gossamer, which they flung back or draped about them at their pleasure."

Dazed and bewildered, Theos Alwyn gazed about him. Then, following the crowd, he was borne along to a large square which bordered on the banks of a river which ran through the city. A strange gilded vessel was seen approaching. Huge oars, like golden fins, projected from the sides of the vessel and dipped lazily now and then into the water, wielded by the hands of invisible rowers. The ship sparkled all over as though it were carved out of one great burning jewel. Golden hangings, falling in rich, loose folds, draped it gorgeously

"A woman or a Goddess?—a rainbow Flame in mortal shape?—a spirit of earth, air, fire, water?—or a Thought of Beauty embodied into human sweetness and made perfect? Clothed in gold attire, and girded with gems, she stood, leaning indolently against the middle mast of the vessel, her great sombre dusky eyes resting drowsily on the swarming masses of people, whose frenzied roar of rapture and admiration sounded like the breaking of billows."

Beauty-stricken, Theos was roughly brought back to a sense of his position as a stranger in the city. Al-Kyris was given up to the worship of a serpent, Nagâya. This woman who had passed was Nagâya's High Priestess, the chief power in the place. All the people worshipped her, and Theos had not, with them, fallen down before her. Immediately he was seized and roughly handled by the mob, who proclaimed him an infidel and a spy. At this opportune moment the Poet Laureate of the Realm, one Sah-lûma, made his appearance. In Al-Kyris the Laureate was a great man, next only indeed to Zephorânim, the King.

Sah-lûma rebuked the crowd for their ill-treatment of the stranger; and then, hearing that Theos was a poet from a far country, took him to his own palace.

Probably no vainer person than Sah-lûma ever existed, whether in a real or imaginary world. They were very artistic in Al-Kyris. Nobody ever

seemed to work except the black slaves. Apparently there was no necessity for that. The people, including the King, positively doted on poets. No wonder Sah-lûma was the Prince of Egoists, seeing that he was the chief poet in Al-Kyris.

The Laureate explained the religion of Al-Kyris to his guest:

"'We believe in no actual creed,—who does? We accept a certain given definition of a supposititious Divinity, together with the suitable maxims and code of morals accompanying that definition—we call this Religion,—and we wear it as we wear our clothing, for the sake of necessity and decency,—though truly we are not half so concerned about it as about the far more interesting details of taste in attire. Still,

flame-darting atmosphere, — neither self-acting nor omnipotent, but only one of many similar orbs moving in strict obedience to fixed mathematical laws. Nevertheless, this knowledge is wisely kept back as much as possible from the multitude,—for, were science to unveil her marvels too openly to semi-educated and vulgarly constituted minds, the result would be, first Atheism, next Republicanism, and, finally, Anarchy and Ruin. If these evils—which, like birds of prey, continually hover about all great kingdoms—are to be averted, we must, for the welfare of the country and people, hold fast to some stated form and outward observance of religious belief.'"

These views were strikingly similar to those held by Theos when he was in the world, and he could thus endorse the further assertions of Sah-lûma, who deemed even a false religion better for the masses than none at all, urging that men were closely allied to brutes. If the moral sense ceased to restrain them they at once leapt the boundary line and gave as much rein to their desires and appetites as hyenas and tigers. And in some natures the moral sense was only kept alive by fear—fear of offending some despotic invisible force that pervaded the Universe, and whose chief and most terrible attribute was not so much creative as destructive power. Thus Sah-lûma again on the theology of Al-Kyris:

"'To propitiate and pacify an unseen Supreme Destroyer is the aim of all religions,—and it is for this

reason we add to our worship of the Sun that of the White Serpent, Nagâya the Mediator. Nagâya is the favourite object of the people's adoration,—they may forget to pay their vows to the Sun, but never to Nagâya, who is looked upon as the emblem of Eternal Wisdom, the only pleader whose persuasions avail to soften the tyrannic humour of the Invincible Devourer of all things. We know how men hate Wisdom and cannot endure to be instructed, and yet they prostrate themselves in abject crowds before Wisdom's symbol every day in the Sacred Temple yonder,—though I much doubt whether such constant devotional attendance is not more for the sake of Lysia, than the Deified Worm!'"

Lysia, High Priestess of Nagâya, was the charmer of the God of Al-Kyris, charmer of the serpent

pure Light the true God existed,—a vast, all-glorious Being, who, with exceeding marvellous love, controlled and guided Creation towards some majestic end. Furthermore, Khosrûl held that thousands of years thence (the times described in Al-Kyris are assumed to be 5000 B.C.) this God would embody a portion of His own existence in human form, "and will send hither a wondrous creature, half God, half man, to live our life, die our death, and teach us by precept and example the surest way to eternal happiness."

It is the prophet who sets out this faith against whom the King and the people of Al-Kyris are mostly incensed. They prefer their worship of Lysia, "the Virgin Priestess of the Sun and the Serpent," who "receives love as statues may receive it—moving all others to frenzy she is herself unmoved." So 'tis said. There is, however, the threatening legend :

"When the High Priestess
Is the King's mistress
Then fall Al-Kyris!"

And the fall of Al-Kyris is imminent.

To the splendours of the court of Zephorânim, King of Al-Kyris, Theos is duly introduced by the Poet Laureate. He finds there that the poetic muse is adored, and Sah-lûma is scarcely less esteemed than the King, who, indeed, his friend

and devotee, would almost make the Poet supreme. The government and religion of Al-Kyris is mainly humbug. They sin freely and get absolution at an annual feast where a maiden is always slaughtered and offered as a sacrifice to Nagâya.

Theos has some quaint experiences. His great friend Sah-lûma enchants the court with a poem—one that Theos faintly remembers he himself had written in days of old. The poet and his friend, after a court function, proceed to a reception at the Palace of Lysia. There they witness and take part in marvellous scenes; and the garden of the Palace gives the novelist an opportunity for those beautiful word-pictures that her

Theos, amazed, watches all. He, too, has another strange revelation before the night is through. In the midst of the revelry he hears a chime of bells, and is reminded of the village church of his earlier years, of odd suggestions of fair women who were wont to pray for those they loved, and who believed their prayers would be answered. As he meditates thereon he is suddenly seized and borne swiftly along till in the moonlight he recognises Lysia. Dramatic indeed is the scene that follows. Theos makes a passionate declaration of love to her, and has the promise from Lysia: "Thou shalt be honoured above the noblest in the land . . . riches, power, fame, all shall be thine—*if thou wilt do my bidding*." The bidding is "*Kill Sah-lûma*," and it is Lysia who shows Theos his sleeping friend and places in his hand the dagger with which to strike. Horrified at the suggestion, Theos flings the weapon from him, escapes from the Palace, and reaches the home of Sah-lûma, where, later, the Poet Laureate rejoins him.

The sands of Al-Kyris were fast running out, and events crowded one upon the other in rapid succession. Theos was terrorised when Sah-lûma recited "the latest offspring of my fertile genius—my lyrical romance 'Nourhàlma.'" Then the full title was proclaimed—"Nourhàlma: A Love-Legend of

the Past" ; and we are given the first line of this mysterious poem :

"*A central sorrow dwells in perfect joy.*"

It was the poem written by Theos after the vision of Edris! He had to hear Sah-lûma proclaim it as his own, to praise it, too, as the work of the other. Assuredly the cup of self-negation for Theos Alwyn was very full. As they talked about the poem a great commotion was heard in the streets. Theos and Sah-lûma found themselves in the midst of a turbulent crowd, who, for once, even disregarded the Poet Laureate. The Prophet Khosrûl was predicting in the midst of excited

The people's final terrors had begun. The last words of the Prophet Khosrûl had been a reiteration of the old forgotten warning regarding the relations of the High Priestess and the King, and the fall of the city was foretold for *that night.*

Escaping the destruction caused by the fall of the obelisk, Sah-lûma and Theos returned to the Palace of the former, and there the Poet Laureate for the first time showed real emotion on learning that his favourite slave, Niphrâta, had left him for ever. Soon Sah-lûma and Theos were summoned by Zèl, High Priest of the Sacrificial Altar, to take part in the Great Sacrifice, for the people were terrified by the many strange happenings and were about to join in solemn unison to implore the favour of Nagâya and the Gods. The Temple of Nagâya was magnificently decorated for this New Year's Festival. There Sah-lûma found that the maiden to be sacrificed was Niphrâta, and made an impassioned demand, and then an appeal, for her life. Niphrâta was permitted her choice, but she repudiated Sah-lûma, appearing to be in love with some ghostly representation of the Poet and to be unconscious of his material existence. She had, she plaintively cried, waited for happiness so long; and, the Sacrificial Priest calling for the victim, she rushed upon the knife the Priest held ready for her. One second and she was seen

speeding towards the knife; the next—and the whole place was enveloped in darkness. Fire broke out in every part of the Temple. A terrible scene of destruction was enacted, and the terrified people rushed hither and thither in the effort to save their lives, efforts vain, because the last day of the city had come,—Al-Kyris was doomed,—there was rescue neither for people nor priests.

Sah-lûma, death being certain, desired to die with Lysia, but his claim was contested by the King. Sovereign and Poet then learned that they had been rivals in love. The prophecy of Khosrûl was being fulfilled. The barbarous Lysia, even in these last moments, was fierce in her hate, and

seemed to him, of a wasted love and a dead passion, passed from the scene, taking with him the dead body of his friend the Poet. And as he kept his steadfast gaze on Sah-lûma's corpse, "the dead Poet's eyes grew into semblance of his own eyes, the dead Sah-lûma's face smiled spectrally back at him in the image of his own face!—it was as though he beheld the Picture of Himself, slain and 'reflected in a magician's mirror'!" Humbly he prayed to God to pardon his sins and to teach him what he should know; and again he heard soft, small voices singing *Kyrie Eleison*, and AWOKE to find himself on the Field of Ardath, the dawn just breaking, and the angel Edris near him. Then Edris told him that in the past he had been Sah-lûma, that in those days he would neither hear Christ nor believe in Him, that his talents had been misused; and she told Theos how his future years should be spent. She promised that afterwards he should meet her in the highest Heaven. "Not till then, *unless the longing of thy love compels.*"

It is in that portion of the work called "Poet and Angel" that the serious aim of Marie Corelli in writing this romance is clearly and emphatically brought out. Theos Alwyn is himself once again; but he is a very different self. Returning to London he is received warmly by his friend Villiers, and hears that "Nourhàlma" has brought him

much of fame and profit. He has ceased to care for one or the other. He tells Villiers he has become a Christian, anxious, so far as he is able, to follow a faith so grand, and pure, and true. In his declarations on the subject we hear what our author again and again urges in many books—that Christianity and Religion are not determined by one sect or the other. In the words of Theos:

"'I am not a "convert" to any particular set form of faith,—what I care for is the faith itself. One can follow and serve Christ without any church dogma. He has Himself told us plainly, in words simple enough for a child to understand, what he would have us do,—and though I, like many others, must regret the absence

in and out of society, with those opinions of sceptics and agnostics which had formerly commended themselves to him but which he now combats with convincing clearness and strength. To emphasise his position he quotes that terse rebuke of Carlyle's, in "Sartor Resartus," as to the uselessness of Voltaire's work :

"Cease, my much respected Herr von Voltaire,—shut thy sweet voice ; for the task appointed thee seems finished. Sufficiently hast thou demonstrated this proposition, considerable or otherwise: That the Mythus of the Christian Religion looks not in the eighteenth century as it did in the eighth. Alas, were thy six-and-thirty quartos and the six-and-thirty thousand other quartos and folios and flying sheets of reams, printed before and since on the same subject, all needed to convince us of so little? But what next? Wilt thou help us to embody the Divine Spirit of that Religion in a new Mythus, in a new vehicle and vesture, that our Souls, otherwise too like perishing, may live? What! thou hast no faculty of that kind? Only a torch for burning and no hammer for building?—Take our thanks then—and thyself away!"

The theologian and the lay thinker alike must follow with keen interest the arguments of Theos Alwyn against atheism, materialism, and, what Miss Corelli calls, Paulism. Uncompromisingly should those writers be denounced who take immorality for their theme, and achieve considerable sales thereby. The declarations of Alwyn are

of particular interest because in them expression is given to many of Marie Corelli's own views on sacred things. The man or woman who is bewildered by the quarrels of the religious sects of these days, and whose bewilderment is increased by the teachings of the cynics, may well exclaim with Alwyn what a howling wilderness this world would be if given over entirely to materialism, and conclude with him that, if it were, scarce a line of division could be drawn between man and the brute beasts of the field! "I consider," says the Poet, "that if you take the hope of an after-joy and blessedness away from the weary, perpetually toiling Million, you destroy, at one

ever the world has known. It may be so, but, at present, I prefer to trust in the higher spiritual instinct of man at his best, rather than accept the testimony of the lesser Unbelieving against the greater Many, whose strength, comfort, patience and endurance, if these virtues come not from God, come not at all."

To those who, through the atheistic views of some in the churches and of hosts outside, begin to feel doubt as to the truth of the Christian faith, this book "Ardath" will be of enormous value. It will strengthen their faith and aid greatly to carry conviction to those who pause, unable to decide amid the chaotic teachings of conflicting theorists. We praise this book more especially for its virtue as an antidote to the pitiful writings of some female novelists whose vicious themes must do much harm amongst the women of the day. "If women give up their faith," declares Alwyn to the Duchess de la Santoisie, "let the world prepare for strange disaster! Good, God-loving women,—women who pray,—women who hope,—women who inspire men to do the best that is in them,—these are the safety and glory of nations! When women forget to kneel,—when women cease to teach their children the 'Our Father,' by whose grandly simple plea Humanity claims Divinity as its origin,—then shall we learn

what is meant by 'men's hearts failing them for fear and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth.' A woman who denies Christ repudiates Him Who, above all others, made her sex as free and honoured as everywhere in Christendom it is. He never refused woman's prayers,—He had patience for her weakness,—pardon for her sins,—and any book written by woman's hand that does Him the smallest shadow of wrong is to me as gross an act as that of one who, loaded with benefits, scruples not to murder his benefactor!"

The reading of "Ardath" will help many to the conviction of Theos Alwyn—"God exists. I,

others ?—If so, they are entirely lacking in spiritual attributes.

"*Secondly*.—Will they take money for their professed knowledge ?—If so, they condemn themselves as paid tricksters.

"*Thirdly*.—Are they men and women of commonplace and thoroughly material life ?—Then, it is plain they cannot influence others to strive for a higher existence.

"*Fourthly*.—Do they love notoriety ?—If they do, the gates of the unseen world are shut upon them.

"*Fifthly*.—Do they disagree among themselves, and speak against one another ?—If so, they contradict by their own behaviour all the laws of spiritual force and harmony.

"*Sixthly* and lastly.—Do they reject Christ ?—If they do, they know nothing whatever about Spiritualism, there being *none* without Him."

There is a charming finale. Theos marries the angel Edris. An angel, yes ; but an angel because *a woman*, *most purely womanly*. That is all, and all women can be angels—"A Dream of Heaven made human !"

CHAPTER VI

"WORMWOOD" AND "THE SOUL OF LILITH"

SOME day a selection of extracts from "The Works of Marie Corelli" will be published, and excellent reading it will prove. For, scattered about the novelist's goodly list of books, one may light on many interesting little observations concerning human nature which will well bear repro-

power of her own beauty to rouse the passions of men." Pauline, by mutual parental head-nodding, is thrown much into the society of young Beauvais (who tells the story), a wealthy banker's son. His description of the girl forms the passage alluded to above:

"Pauline de Charmilles was not a shy girl, but by this I do not mean it to be in the least imagined that she was bold. On the contrary, she had merely that quick brightness and *esprit* which is the happy heritage of so many Frenchwomen, none of whom think it necessary to practise or assume the chilly touch-me-not diffidence and unbecoming constraint which make the young English 'mees' such a tame and tiresome companion to men of sense and humour. She was soon perfectly at her ease with me, and became prettily garrulous and confidential, telling me stories of her life at Lausanne, describing the loveliness of the scenery on Lake Leman, and drawing word-portraits of her teachers and school-mates with a facile directness and point that brought them at once before the mind's eye as though they were actually present."

Pauline's ingenuousness and alluring looks quickly enslave young Beauvais. He cannot understand the reason of this fascination. He quite realises that she is a bread-and-butter school-girl, and "a mere baby in thought," but—she is beautiful. So, having granted that the net in which he finds himself immeshed is purely a physical one, he thus descants on the reasonableness of his fall:

"Men never fall in love at first with a woman's mind; only with her body. They may learn to admire the mind afterwards, if it prove worth admiration, but it is always a secondary thing. This may be called a rough truth, but it is true, for all that. Who marries a woman of intellect by choice? No one; and if some unhappy man does it by accident, he generally regrets it. A stupid beauty is the most comfortable sort of housekeeper going, believe me—she will be strict with the children, scold the servants, and make herself look as ornamental as she can, till age and fat render ornament superfluous. But a woman of genius, with that strange subtle attraction about her which is yet not actual beauty,—she is the person to be avoided if you would have peace; if you would escape reproach; if you would elude the fixed and melancholy watchfulness of a pair of eyes haunting you in the night."

a rose from her *bouquet-de-corsage*, she fastens it in his button-hole, enchanting him completely.

Comes, then, Silvion Guidèl, nephew of M. Vaudron, Curé of the parish in which live the De Charmilles. Guidèl is destined for the priesthood and possesses considerable personal charms. Beauvais *père* comments on them :

"'A remarkably handsome fellow, that Guidèl!' he said. 'Dangerously so, for a priest! It is fortunate that his lady penitents will not be able to see him very distinctly through the confessional-gratings, else who knows what might happen! He has a wonderful gift of eloquence too. Dost thou like him, Gaston?'

"'No!' I replied frankly, and at once, 'I cannot say I do!'

"My father looked surprised.

"'But why?'

"'Impossible to tell, *mon père*. He is fascinating, he is agreeable, he is brilliant; but there is something in him that I mistrust!'"

As events prove, Beauvais *fils* has only too good reason to distrust the embryo priest. Soon after, Beauvais *père* is called away to London for several weeks, and, as a consequence of the superintending of the Paris banking house falling entirely to the son, Gaston sees but little of his *fiancée*. But he is often in the company of Silvion Guidèl, to whom he becomes much attached in spite of his previous feelings towards M. Vaudron's nephew.

So, writing the history of those days long afterwards, Beauvais acknowledges that he was mistaken in changing his attitude towards Guidèl:

"Though first impressions are sometimes erroneous, I believe there is a balance in favour of their correctness. If a singular antipathy seizes you for a particular person at first sight, no matter how foolish it may seem, you may be almost sure that there is something in your two natures that is destined to remain in constant opposition. You may conquer it for a time; it may even change, as it did in my case, to profound affection; but, sooner or later, it will spring up again, with tenfold strength and deadliness; the reason of your first aversion will be made painfully manifest, and the end of it all will be doubly bitter because of the love that for a brief while sweetened it. I say I

manner and appearance, he puts the young banker off with light speeches in which, however, there is a certain bitterness which puzzles the latter considerably. However, Beauvais still suspects nothing, but at length Pauline shatters all his dreams of the future, and makes him a miserable wretch for life by confessing that she loves Silvion Guidèl, that her love is returned, and that, in consequence of this mutual passion, the worst of possible fates has befallen her.

Then Beauvais flies to absinthe drinking, which is the keynote of the story. From that time on it is all absinthe. A broken-down painter, André Gessonex, lures him on to this disastrous form of begetting forgetfulness; and this is the first step down the short steep hill which leads to the young banker's utter ruin. Having once tasted the potent and fascinating mixture, he returns to it again and again, and gradually it warps him, physically and mentally, finally transforming him into one of the meanest scoundrels in Paris.

But this is after many days. On the morning after his first bout of absinthe drinking, Beauvais decides to challenge Silvion, but discovers that the betrayer of Pauline has disappeared from Paris. Thereupon, though sore at heart, he determines to save Pauline's family an infinity of shame by marrying the girl; and so the preparations continue.

But in the interval that elapses between this decision and the date fixed for the nuptials, the absinthe works a terrible change in Beauvais' attitude towards Pauline, with the result that, when the day of the ceremony arrives, he denounces her before her parents and the large assembly of guests as the cast-off mistress of Guidèl, and harshly refuses to make her his wife.

The awful effect of this speech may be imagined; poor Pauline's looks confirm the truth of his statement; the guests quietly leave the broken-hearted parents with their daughter; there is no marriage. Take the decorations down; fling the wedding feast to the mendicants who whine round the house;

ruined victim, could you not have dealt with *him* and have spared *her*? God! I would as soon wring the neck of a bird that trusted me, as add any extra weight to the sorrows of an already broken-hearted woman!'"

More than this, the indignant old man gives his son a substantial sum of money, and turns him out of his house.

Pauline, too, leaves her home in a mysterious and sudden fashion, without telling any one where she is going. The death of her father, M. de Charmilles, quickly follows. Beauvais drinks himself stupid every night, and spends his days doggedly hunting for Pauline, who, he feels sure, has hidden herself in the loathsome slums in which Paris abounds. And in time he does meet her, but long before this he encounters her seducer, Silvion Guidèl, and, after a mad struggle, throttles him, and casts the corpse into the Seine.

The murder is not traced home to Beauvais, who drinks more deeply than ever of the deadly absinthe, and becomes more surely its slave with every draught. Gessonex, the disreputable artist who introduced him to this form of vice, ends his failure of a career by shooting himself on the pavement outside a *café* after one of these carousals, and it is while Beauvais is visiting the artist's grave that he at last sets eyes on Pauline, kneeling by the tomb of the De Charmilles. For he cannot mistake

the figure crouching by that closed door : "She was slight, and clad in poorest garments—the evening wind blew her thin shawl about her like a gossamer sail,—but the glimmer of the late sunlight glistened on a tress of nut-brown hair that had escaped from its coils and fell loosely over her shoulders,—and my heart beat thickly as I looked,—I knew—I felt that woman was Pauline ! "

When he endeavours to track her to her lodgings, however, she unconsciously eludes him, and he obtains no clue as to where she may be found.

Weeks go by, and Beauvais swallows more and more absinthe by way of deadening thought and feeling. The insidious poison is beginning to tell

" Viens sur ton aile, Ange fidèle
Prendre mon cœur !
C'est le plus ardent de mes vœux ;—
Près de Marie
Place-moi bientôt dans les cieux !
O guide aimable, sois favorable
A mon désir
Et viens finir
Ma triste vie
Avec Marie ! "

It is Pauline at last ! Then the absinthe tells its tale, and Beauvais completes his scheme of vengeance. With cold-blooded ferocity he confesses that he has slain her lover, whereupon the desolate girl, the hopes she had fostered of meeting Silvion again being for ever shattered, buries her woes in the dark bosom of the river of sighs.

Beauvais haunts the Morgue for two days, and his patience is rewarded. Here is a piece of description which, in its way, is perfect :

" An afternoon came when I saw the stretcher carried in from the river's bank with more than usual pity and reverence,—and I, pressing in with the rest of the morbid spectators, saw the fair, soft, white body of the woman I had loved and hated and maddened and driven to her death, laid out on the dull hard slab of stone like a beautiful figure of frozen snow. The river had used her tenderly—poor little Pauline !—it had caressed her gently and had not disfigured her delicate limbs or spoilt her pretty face—she looked so wise, so sweet and calm, that I fancied the cold and muddy Seine must

have warmed and brightened to the touch of her drowned beauty!

"Yes!—the river had fondled her!—had stroked her cheeks and left them pale and pure,—had kissed her lips and closed them in a childlike, happy smile,—had swept all her soft hair back from the smooth white brow just to show how prettily the blue veins were pencilled under the soft transparent skin,—had closed the gentle eyes and deftly pointed the long dark lashes in a downward sleepy fringe—and had made of one little dead girl so wondrous and piteous a picture, that otherwise hard-hearted women sobbed at sight of it, and strong men turned away with hushed footsteps and moistened eyes."

And that, practically, is the end of the story, for Gaston Beauvais, having revenged himself on his

and you must exert it. I have a large medical practice, and cases like yours are alarmingly common, and as much on the increase as morphinomania amongst women, but I tell you frankly, no medicine can do good where the patient refuses to employ his own power of resistance. I must ask you, therefore, for your own sake, to bring all your will to bear on the effort to overcome this fatal habit of yours, as a matter of duty and conscience.'"

But the physician's admonition falls on heedless ears. Beauvais returns to the alluring glass, and the book ends with the confession that he is a confirmed *absintheur*—"a thing more abject than the lowest beggar that crawls through Paris whining for a sou! —a slinking, shuffling beast, half monkey, half man, whose aspect is so vile, whose body is so shaken with delirium, whose eyes are so murderous, that if you met me by chance in the day-time, you would probably shriek for sheer alarm!"

Such is the graphic and terrible picture drawn by Marie Corelli of the effects of this iniquitous draught. If Beauvais had not been tempted by Gessonex to taste it, it is not probable that Pauline's piteous confession would have resulted in such wholesale tragedy; for Heloïse St. Cyr, the sweet woman-friend of the bride-elect's, dies, too, and so an entire happy household is destroyed by reason of one man's uncontrollable savagery.

Had Beauvais never put his lips to the fatal

glass, he would in all probability, on hearing what had befallen his sweetheart, have quietly broken off the match. For, it must be remembered, he was a respectable young banker, of sober mien and quiet ways, not a Bohemian and frequenter of all-night *cafés*. But he tasted absinthe, and so brought about his undoing, as many another young Parisian is bringing it about at the present day. Here is the novelist's fierce denunciation of the vice :

" Paris, steeped in vice and drowned in luxury, feeds her brain on such loathsome literature as might make even coarse-mouthed Rabelais and Swift recoil—day after day, night after night, the absinthe-drinkers crowd

Marie Corelli does not overstate the case when she declares that absinthe has taken a grim and cancerous hold of Paris. It is called for in the *cafés* as naturally as we, in London, order a "small" or "large" Bass. But what a difference in the two beverages! A French writer of authority says that 15 per cent. of the French army are rendered incapable by the use of absinthe.

The bulk of the French populace drinks either *bock* or light wine, and it takes a fairly large amount of either to produce intoxication. In England the populace drinks draught ale or whisky. Comparing the two peoples and their behaviour—for example—on public holidays, we must allow that the French are by far the soberer nation. But in London we have not—except in one or two West-End *cafés*—this dreadful absinthe, and we may well be thankful that the drinking of it has not grown upon us as it has grown upon the Parisians.

Could not Marie Corelli turn the heavy guns of her genius on the drink question on *this* side of the Channel? The field is a very wide one. Children under fourteen are now prevented by law from being served at public-houses. It would be a good plan, too, if women could not order intoxicants from grocers. Many a man, in discharging his grocer's account, does not trouble to inspect the items, or is not afforded the chance of inspecting

them ; many a man, however, if he were to submit his grocer's book to a close scrutiny, would find that bottles of inferior wines and spirits were being supplied along with the raisins and baking-powder not for his own, the cook's, or his family's use, but for the secret consumption of his wife.

In suggesting new legislative measures with regard to the sale of intoxicants in this country, Marie Corelli would be performing a public service worthy of the Nation's profoundest gratitude.

"The Soul of Lilith," which was published about a year after "Wormwood," is a work of

great sales. Turn to page 319 of "The Soul of Lilith," and you will find the matter put neatly in a nutshell:

"And so it happens that when wielders of the pen essay to tell us of wars, of shipwrecks, of hairbreadth escapes from danger, of love and politics and society, we read their pages with merely transitory pleasure and frequent indifference, but when they touch upon subjects beyond earthly experience—when they attempt, however feebly, to lift our inspirations to the possibilities of the Unseen, then we give them our eager attention and almost passionate interest."

This passage may afford a little light to those people who are for ever declaring that they cannot understand what other people can see in Marie Corelli. The fact is, Marie Corelli appeals to a tremendous section of the public—a section in which, we are assured, the fair sex does not predominate. Indeed, the majority of the novelist's correspondents are *men*. Marie Corelli is intensely in earnest, imaginative, and passionate. She lets her reader know, before she has covered many pages, precisely what her book is to be about, and in this way she spares one the irritation excited by those old-fashioned writers who used to drone on for chapter after chapter, making headway in an exasperatingly slow and cumbrous fashion.

Then it must be taken into consideration that there is a very big public which has practically

nothing to do except eat meals, sleep, take exercise, and read novels. Such people are necessarily more introspective than busy folk, and many of them are exceedingly anxious as to what will become of them when it shall please Providence to put an end to their aimless existence in this vale of smiles and tears. Marie Corelli supplies them with ample food for thought and argument.

Perhaps all these attempts to solve the Unsolvable have a morbid tendency; a little simple faith is certainly more salutary. However that may be, a very great public regards such attempts as more engrossing reading-matter than tales "of love and politics and society"; and a still stronger

This is the kernel of the story, which narrates how El-Râmi, a man of Arabian origin, possessing many of the mysteriously occult powers peculiar to the Indian *fakir*, injects a certain fluid into the still warm veins of a dead Egyptian girl-child called Lilith. In this way he preserves her body in a living condition, and the success of his experiment is proved by the fact that Lilith passes from childhood to womanhood whilst in this state, and answers questions put to her by El-Râmi.

It is the desire of El-Râmi, however, to make himself master of Lilith's soul as well as of her body, and this impious object leads to the destruction of the fair form he has preserved and of his own reason. For he falls in love with Lilith, and the declaration of his passion is followed by her crumbling away to dust. The shock to his highly strung organisation results in his mental collapse, and from this he never recovers.

There are many passages of wild beauty and extraordinary power in this story, which occupies many pages in the telling before the superbly dramatic *dénouement* is reached. Heliobas, the wise physician of "A Romance of Two Worlds," but now turned monk, is introduced into the story, and warns El-Râmi that his atheistic experiment will prove fruitless:

"'How it is that you have not foreseen this thing I cannot imagine,'—continued the monk—'The body

of Lilith has grown under your very eyes from the child to the woman by the merest material means,—the chemicals which Nature gives us, and the forces which Nature allows us to employ. How then should you deem it possible for the Soul to remain stationary? With every fresh experience its form expands—its desires increase,—its knowledge widens,—and the everlasting necessity of Love compels its life to Love's primeval source. The Soul of Lilith is awakening to its fullest immortal consciousness,—she realises her connection with the great angelic worlds—her kindredship with those worlds' inhabitants, and, as she gains this glorious knowledge more certainly, so she gains strength. And this is the result I warn you of—her force will soon baffle yours, and you will have no more influence over her than you have over the highest Archangel in the realms of the Supreme Creator.'"

Himself with the Feminine attributes as well as the Masculine?" cries El-Râmi, in astonishment.

"'There are two governing forces of the Universe,' replied the monk deliberately—'one, the masculine, is Love,—the other, feminine, is Beauty. These Two, reigning together, are GOD;—just as man and wife are One. From Love and Beauty proceed Law and Order. You cannot away with it—it is so. Love and Beauty produce and reproduce a million forms with more than a million variations, and when God made Man in His Own Image it was as Male and Female. From the very first growths of life in all worlds,—from the small, almost imperceptible beginning of that marvellous evolution which resulted in Humanity,—evolution which to us is calculated to have taken thousands of years, whereas in the eternal countings it has occupied but a few moments, Sex was proclaimed in the lowliest sea-plants, of which the only remains we have are in the Silurian formations,—and was equally maintained in the humblest *lingula* inhabiting its simple bivalve shell. Sex is proclaimed throughout the Universe with an absolute and unswerving regularity through all grades of nature. Nay, there are even male and female Atmospheres which when combined produce forms of life.'"

The verbal duel between Heliobas, the man of God, and El-Râmi, the man of Science, is exceedingly well-written. In the course of their conversation El-Râmi opines that Heliobas is more of a poet than either a devotee or a scientist. The monk's rejoinder is worth quoting:

"'Perhaps I am! Yet poets are often the best scientists, because they never *know* they are scientists. They arrive by a sudden intuition at the facts which it takes several Professors Dry-as-Dust years to discover. When once you feel you are a scientist, it is all over with you. You are a clever biped who has got hold of a crumb out of the universal loaf, and for all your days afterwards you are turning that crumb over and over under your analytical lens. But a poet takes up the whole loaf unconsciously, and hands portions of it about at haphazard and with the abstracted behaviour of one in a dream.'"

In spite, however, of Heliobas's warning words, El-Râmi proceeds with his experiment, which ends as recorded. The scientist is taken by his brother Féraz—a poetically conceived character—to

And surely the gentle rejoinder of Irene is one that should silence controversy, dissipate vain speculation, and bring peace and rest to many thousands of minds which are wearied with attempts "to prove the apparently Unprovable."

CHAPTER VII

MR. BENTLEY'S ENCOURAGEMENT — SOME LETTERS OF AN OLD PUBLISHER

WHEN Solomon was at the zenith of his glory the number of people who could read must have been extremely limited, and yet that monarch—whose methods of administering justice may compare, in point of brevity and common

publication of his work, has still had the vitriolic condemnation of the jealous critic to contend with.

There have been occasional straightforward articles in the literary journals on the ethics of criticism, and now and then a writer of note and influence has come forward with a word in behalf of the literary pilgrim, who, however, still goes on his way having no real weapon of defence save his native ability—and in Marie Corelli's case this has proved to be a very sharp weapon indeed!

How Mr. Bentley first became acquainted with Miss Corelli has already been described in the chapter on "A Romance of Two Worlds." When Mr. Bentley paid his first call on her, he found her, to his astonishment, a mere school-girl. It was altogether a novel experience to him to have dealings with a writer who was at once so youthful and so gifted, and the attitude he adopted towards her from that time onwards was benignly paternal.

Marie Corelli has never employed a literary agent, and fails to see why a writer should not manage his or her own business affairs without any such extraneous assistance. In some respects we ourselves are of opinion that the agent is an undesirable "middleman," he being far too apt to hold out glittering awards which lure authors on to work above their normal pace; but it must be borne in mind that there are many authors who are poor

hands at haggling over terms with publishers and editors, and, in such cases, the literary agent proves of great service.

No gentleman of this order, then, came between Miss Corelli and Mr. Bentley after the successful appearance of the "Romance," terms for future work were arranged to the mutual satisfaction of author and publisher, and book after book, under these genial auspices, was steadily written, each new volume serving still more fully to substantiate the high opinion Mr. Bentley formed of Miss Corelli's abilities after reading her first manuscript.

Shortly after the publication of "The Soul of

already quoted. We will now proceed to give a selection of extracts from others. The reader will not fail to observe how happily cordial—affectionate, almost—were the relations of these two—the grey-headed publisher and the young lady novelist.

The first of our selection has to do with "Ardath," which Mr. Bentley had been reading in manuscript form :—

"*March 3rd*, 1889.

"You have been very patient and considerate, and I think you believed that I would not lose any time in reading your Romance, for a Romance it is, and a most original one. *I have read it all*, that is, to 964. I should like to see the conclusion.

"The story of Al-Kyris is a magnificent dream, the product of a rich imagination, the story rising towards the close to considerable power. The design, the method, the treatment, all are original, and the fancy has an Eastern richness, and, I presume, a legitimate basis in fact.

* * * * *

"There is so much in the work that I could write yards upon yards about it. The fine drawing of Sahlûma, its consistency, and the moral taught by him; the character of Lysia, typifying Lust; that of poor Niphrâta, of the King, and the finely conceived character of Theos; the scenes, one after the other, in rapid succession, ending in the fall of Al-Kyris, should give you a *status* as a writer of no ordinary character.

* * * * *

"There can be no doubt that it is a most unusual work, a daring and sustained flight of the imagination.

You will have to rest after it, for some of your *life* has gone into it."

"*March 14th*, 1889.

"You must bear in mind that in giving an opinion I am bound to have an eye upon what I deem defect, rightly or wrongly. I have no need to call your attention to merits—if I had, I could write a quarto letter on the merits of Al-Kyris, in which I include, by the way, the beautiful scene on Ardath, and the first introduction of Edris. So in the epilogue I quite agree with your critic in his high admiration of the Cathedral scene, and the re-appearance of Edris.

* * * * *

"Please do what you wish—you may be quite right and I wrong. I shall be very glad to be wrong, as I sincerely desire your success, because you have a worthy motive and an honourable ambition in writing

"*April 21st*, 1889.

"As to an appeal to critics, I never make one. No good book, that is a really literary production, should require it, and any other sort of book doesn't deserve it."

"*May 27th*, 1889.

"The criticism will do no harm, though it may exercise some in trying to understand how the blowing hot and cold can be reconciled. For years almost the whole Press regularly attacked Miss Broughton, and I have often said that in a long business life I have never known any one so decried as she was by the Press, who yet had the good fortune to see the public set aside the verdict of the critics. May the public so deal with you, and leave the critics to their isolation."

The following was written after Mr. Gladstone's first visit to the novelist. It should be explained that Mr. Gladstone, when he first called, found Miss Corelli "out," and was afterwards invited by her to come to tea on a particular date:

"*June 4th*, 1889.

"I do indeed congratulate you on bringing the man (Gladstone), who is in all men's mouths, to your feet, and that, too, simply by your writings. I know you will be charmed with him, and he with you. That is a safe prophecy. You will find him delightfully eloquent, various in knowledge, and highly appreciative."

And again, on the same topic:

"UPTON, SLOUGH, BUCKS,
"*June 6th*, 1889.

"How very kind of you to write to me the

very interesting account of your interview with Mr. Gladstone!

"It is an event of your life, an event of which you may well be proud, because the interview arises from his interest in the product of your brain and heart. It does him honour that he should thus seek to form the acquaintance of one whom he believes to be possibly moulding public opinion in religious matters.

"I do most heartily congratulate you, because, in the history of your life, such an interview henceforth becomes a bit of your career, as Fox's conversations with the poet Rogers forms an interesting and valuable episode in Rogers' life."

The following are characteristic of Mr. Bentley's opinions and frame of mind. The conclusion

delightful and refreshing, and the idle talk of the 'crushes' is weariness of the flesh and death to the spirit. You, who aim at higher things, have an ideal; you who, thank God, believe this world to be a stepping-stone to one of immeasurable superiority, must often have asked yourself, after one of the great assemblies to which you went or where you received—*Cui bono?* Yes, if the weather keeps decent, I will with the greatest pleasure refresh my mind with some converse with you."

Now occurs an interval of ten months, and then the manuscript of "Wormwood" evokes the following sentiments :—

"*August* 5*th*, 1890.

"DEAR THELMA,—Of the power in your latest work there can be no doubt. The interest commences immediately, and is on the increase throughout. The grip you have of the story is extraordinary, and will react upon the reader, ensuring success."

"*September* 5*th*, 1890.

"The public, however, may forgive you for the extraordinary power of some of the scenes, which haunt me now, though it is a month since I read them."

"*October* 9*th*, 1890.

"When you are on the eve of a remarkable success in the making or marring of which a few days can have no part, it is a little unreasonable that you should take so gloomy a view. I await with confidence the happier feeling which I feel certain is to succeed these darker moments, and am, as ever. . . ."

"*October* 20*th*, 1890.

"I feel very confident in a great run upon your

book. Power is what the public never refuses to recognise."

"*October 24th*, 1890.

"You so distrust yourself, that you believe your success hangs upon arts which belonged to publishers who existed in the days of Lady Charlotte Bury, whereas you have a right to presume that the public need nothing more than to know a novel of yours is at the libraries.

* * * * *

"Once more, believe a little more in yourself."

"*November 3rd*, 1890.

"I have just had a debate about 'Wormwood' with one of the leading critics of the day, who was complaining of the gloom which overspread the book.

"'Well,' said I, 'you cannot deny that none but

"*October 17th*, 1891.

"But you must not complain; your recognition, though much slower, is more and more a fact. Your reputation to-day is higher by a good way than it was two years ago, as the demand for your works indicates. Be true to yourself, and only write when the impulse is irresistible, and all will be well with little Thelma."

The first part of the next letter has reference to "The Soul of Lilith." Following it are further remarks about "Ardath," which, of all Marie Corelli's books, seems to have taken the greatest hold on Mr. Bentley.

"*November 4th*, 1891.

"I am glad to hear of your successful progress with your new story. I get quite curious as the time approaches. One cannot feel with you as with most authors, that we know what is coming. Every new story is a new departure.

* * * * *

"I had a charming letter from Herr Poorten Schwartz (Maarten Maartens) in which he speaks in glowing terms of 'Ardath,' which he had just been reading. He says the description of Al-Kyris is a magnificent effort of the imagination, in which I entirely agree, and I rank the description in richness of conception with Beckford's famous 'Hall of Eblis.' So far, I think it is your greatest height of imaginative conception—just as in 'Wormwood,' much as it repels me in parts, I cannot but recognise the tremendous dramatic force of many of the scenes."

"*January 3rd*, 1892.

"I can say truthfully that I have not known any writer bear success better than you do, and may you be put to the test for a long time to come.

* * * * *

"I like much to hear you say, 'As long as my brain under God's guidance will serve me.' It is an age when such an observation is by no means an ordinary one, yet I doubt whether the genius of any writer attains its full scope unless it listen to His voice."

"*January 29th*, 1892.

"'Good wine needs no bush,' and I am averse to associating your name or mine with a system of vulgar exploitation.

"What do Dickens, Thackeray, George Eliot, Collins, or Besant owe to exploitation, and how long do the repu-

So you have the world before you, and ought to die a rich woman, if that is worth living for."

"*April* 16*th*, 1892.

"DEAR LITTLE LADY,—

"It makes me feel uncomfortable to hear of brave little Thelma being half killed, like Keats, for a review.

"Pooh! stuff and nonsense! You are not to be snuffed out by any notice. As to not writing again, you will live to write many a good book yet.

"Laugh at the review, and don't notice it to any of your friends. You have a good spirit of your own, and you don't mean to be crushed, and neither will you be. You will be the first to laugh this day six months for having been temporarily disquieted.

"As to Law! Oh, lor! Wouldn't your enemies, if you have any, rejoice to see you at loggerheads with the Press. No, no, that wouldn't do.

"You can *firmly* rely on your gifts to render nugatory all attacks upon you of the nature of the present. Let me hear that Thelma's herself again.

"Yours sincerely,

"GEORGE BENTLEY."

"*May* 4*th*, 1892.

"The attacks do not daunt me, and it seems to me that three out of the four are by one hand."

"UPTON, SLOUGH,

"*May* 17*th*, 1892.

"DEAR THELMA,—

"I am right glad at the news in your letter. I am sure you will now see that the late attacks on 'Lilith' will derive their importance only when you

notice them. Even from those who do not like highly imaginative literature, I have heard the remark that the reviews in question were entirely one-sided, and left one to suppose that the English public was cracked in running after a writer without a solitary merit.

* * * * *

"Put together the talents of all your critics, and ask them to paint the city of Al-Kyris. That came out of a finely sustained vision, your intense interest in your subject keeping it at a white heat. I reckon two-thirds of 'Ardath' as one of the finest contributions to imaginative literature which this country possesses.

* * * * *

"Never write a line if the humour is not in you. It is that impulsion to write because you can't help it,

"*October 4th*, 1892.

"I wish you were more assured on this point. Such a creation as 'Ardath' will not be again in our time. It assures your position amongst all those whose opinion is worth having, as surely as Beckford is remembered to this day by the 'Hall of Eblis.'"

The next (undated) was written just after Queen Victoria desired that *all* Marie Corelli's works should be sent to her :—

"Bravo! Bravissimo!! dear Thelma, as one used to cry out in my old opera days, when the glorious Grisi denounced Pollio in *Norma*. I rejoice at your being recognised all round by Scotch Duchess and Australian wool merchant, and I hope it may be that Her Most Gracious Majesty will enjoy a trip into the two worlds of her bright little subject's creation, wherein the subject is Queen and the Queen her subject."

"*October 28th*, 1892.

"I was unable to write and tell you how glad I am that you are once more yourself again.

"Bother the papers ; don't let them bother you. If I lived next door to you, I should intercept them all.

* * * * *

"It seems a growing fashion to use strong language, and certainly such language has been levelled at you. The fair sex in former days were held to command a chivalrous respect, which seems to be almost as much a thing of the past as the Crusades."

This of October 28th, 1892, forms the last

of the batch of extracts placed in our hands. Throughout his business associations with Miss Corelli, it is apparent that Mr. Bentley was everything that was kindly, tactful, and encouraging. The imaginative temperament is always a difficult one to deal with, and Mr. Bentley excelled himself in this respect. Even when he wished to bestow a mild rebuke he did so with an old-fashioned courtesy that is truly delightful and only too rare in these days of dictated, type-written epistles.

There are other letters, but from these it will be only necessary to cull a sentence here and there. All the above-quoted communications, we should add, were in Mr. Bentley's own handwriting.

They take so much time, you see!" Carlyle replied that he had been accustomed to this sort of thing—he had got works printed in Scotland, and—— "Yes, indeed, sir," rejoined the printer, "we are aware of that. We have a man here from Edinburgh, and when he took up a bit of your copy, he dropped it as if it had burnt his fingers, and cried out, 'Lord, have mercy! have you got that man to print for? Lord knows when we shall get done with his corrections.'"

It is evident that Mr. Bentley deemed his *protégée*—if we may so term her—capable of turning her pen in many directions. "I am not sure that you could not give us a fine historical novel," he wrote in 1887, "if you got hold of a character which fascinated your imagination."

In a letter dated May 7th, 1888, he refers playfully to "the little blue silk dress" which seems to have taken his fancy on a previous occasion, nor did he forget the young novelist's birthday, for in a previous letter of the same year he declares that, if he were in London, he would "be tempted to cast prudence to the winds, even to the perilous East wind, to offer you my greeting on the first of May."

Besides being a keen judge of manuscript—as, indeed, he had need to be—Mr. Bentley wrote very pleasant prose himself. His reading was ex-

tensive and his comments thereon lucid and thoughtful. In 1883 he printed for private circulation among his friends a little green-covered volume called "After Business." A copy of this work, presented to Miss Corelli a fortnight after Mr. Bentley first met her, lies before us. There are seven chapters, whose nature can be divined from their titles: I. An Evening with Erasmus; IV. How the World Wags; V. An Afternoon with Odd Volumes—and so forth. A peaceful, soothing little book is this. Here is the final passage of the "Odd Volumes" chapter. It affords a happy example of the book's literary flavour, of its truly "After Business" characteristics:

Always, indeed, he urged her to *be herself*—to embody in her books the message so nobly delivered by a poet:

> "*Stand upright, speak thy thought, declare*
> *The truth thou hast, that all may share;*
> *Be bold, proclaim it everywhere;*
> *They only live who dare.*"

CHAPTER VIII

"*BARABBAS*"

A "Passion Play" in Prose

"WHY should women's writings be in any respect inferior to that of men if they are only willing to follow out *the same method of self-education*?" asked Charles Kingsley. This was of the nature of a prophecy, for had Kingsley

life, with passion, and with naturalness—the naturalness which has existed from creation—is the highest prose, for it is poem and prose hand-in-hand, an achievement, a oneness of the two.

This was Marie Corelli's idea in penning "Barabbas." Setting her mind hard and fast to face creeds and defy criticism; true to the instincts which permeated her mind throughout her pristine works, she went on following her soul impression, her inspiration to see "good" in most things, nobility in men and women who might be scourged by the world. And thus "Barabbas," though a robber, might have had some strong points, and though of an evil nature must certainly, from scriptural evidence, have had the sympathy of the populace. That sympathy gave the author the keynote to produce the human drama, which is lived over and over again to-day and for ever,—and which is aptly called *A Dream of the World's Tragedy*.

Marie Corelli, true to her colours in this later work, still adheres to poetic spirituality, the "ideal," the sublime, the free, the sympathetic, mingled with the rendering of a forcible and traitorous character in that of Judith (the heroine of the book) in its full strength of weakness and evil; and its final magnificent revulsion from *a past* to the glory of a holy repentance and in finding the

g, in the symbol of the cross. Take this
e, where after madness and despair she meets
death :

The sun poured straightly down upon her,—she
ed like a fair startled sylph in the amber glow of
burning Eastern noonday,—gradually an expression
urprise and then of rapture lighted her pallid face,—
lifted her gaze slowly, and, with seeming wonder
incredulity, fixed her eyes on the near grassy
e of the Mount of Olives, where two ancient fig-
s twining their gnarled boughs together made an
of dark and soothing shade. Pointing thither
one hand, she smiled,—and once more her match-
beauty flashed up through form and face like a
e.
'Lo there!' she exclaimed joyously,—'how is it

arms about, 'lo from henceforth I will clamour for it, rage for it, die for it! Three times have I falsely sworn, and thus have I taken the full measure of a Lie! Its breadth, its depth, its height, its worth, its meaning, its results, its crushing suffocating weight upon the soul! I know its nature,—'tis all hell in a word! 'tis a "yea" or "nay," on which is balanced all eternity! I will no more of it,—I will have truth, the truth of men, the truth of women,—no usurer shall be called honest,—no wanton shall be called chaste,—to please the humour of the passing hour! No—no, I will have none of this, but only truth! The truth that is seen as a shining, naked scimitar in the hand of God, glistening horribly! I, Peter, will declare it!—I who did swear a lie three times, will speak the truth three thousand times in reprisal of my sin! Weep, rave, tear thy reverend hairs, unreverent Jew! Thou who as stiff-necked, righteous Pharisee, didst practise cautious virtue and self-seeking sanctity, and now through unbelief art left most desolate!'"

The critics were as usual up in arms over "Barabbas," but in spite of them its sale has been immense. The book has made such headway since its publication that it has been translated into more foreign tongues than any other novel of either the past or present—the translations comprising thirty to forty languages. As a matter of original conception, tragical effect and clearness of diction, "Barabbas" is considered by many the best of Marie Corelli's works.

In "Barabbas" there is no loitering by the way, as

it were, to argue, although the moral throughout is strong enough. The author's sensibility grasps the situation of that potent day in the world's era with a subtle reasoning of how to-day things are precisely the same, and would be precisely the same at the advent of a new Christus, save possibly as regards the execution. For our lunatic asylums afford an infinitely better kind of torture than the cross.

The character of Jesus of Nazareth, "the dreamy Young Philosopher" of his short day, is the poem of the tragedy. Barabbas himself is a character of much force, despite his weakness in the hands of Judith. The soliloquies of Melchior throughout the first part of the book are somewhat drastic

covet? Thou art not able to "comprehend" these simplest facts of simple nature,—and nature being but the outward reflex of God's thought, how shouldst thou understand the workings of His interior Spirit which is Himself in all? Whether He create a world, or breathe the living Essence of His own Divinity into aerial atoms to be absorbed in flesh and blood, and born as Man of virginal Woman, He hath the power supreme to do such things, if such be His great pleasure. Talkest thou of miracles?—thou art thyself a miracle,—thou livest in a miracle,—the whole world is a miracle, and exists in spite of thee! Go thy ways, man; search out truth in thine own fashion; but if it should elude thee, blame not the truth which ever is, but thine own witlessness which cannot grasp it!'"—

a terse reasoning out of the living essence of the supreme, and an almost matchless soliloquy.

Here is another of Melchior's speeches:

"Men are pigmies,—they scuttle away in droves before a storm or the tremor of an earthquake,—they are afraid for their lives. And what are their lives? The lives of motes in a sunbeam, of gnats in a mist of miasma,—nothing more. And they will never be anything more, till they learn how to make them valuable. And that lesson will never be mastered save by the few."

It was Marie Corelli's idea in this particular work evidently to clothe her characters in the real *Human*, that which is changeless and unchangeable as cycles in the world's eye; and to show that the mind of man in its essentials *does not change*, and

that its perfection is gained only by the spiritual side of things, overcapping the material and the so-called animal. That God intends men and women to attain this superiority over matter is one of the æsthetic treasures of Marie Corelli's literature, generally not particularly well received, still less understood, but haply none the less welcome, as it is a conception of its own peculiar originality by no means local. The fictional character of Caiaphas in all his sycophancy and sacerdotal arrogancy occupies a measure of the romance, furnishing a tone of treachery throughout.

"'Once dead,' whispered Caiaphas, with a contemptuous side-glance at the fair-faced enemy of his craft

"'Friend, I have died!'—she said,—'at my Lord's feet I laid down all my life. Men made me what I was; God makes me what I am!'

* * * * * *

"'Thou'rt man'—she answered,—'therefore as man thou speakest! Lay all the burden upon woman,—the burden of sin, of misery, of shame, of tears; teach her to dream of perfect love, and then devour her by selfish lust,—slay her by slow tortures innumerable,—cast her away and trample on her even as a worm in the dust, and then when she has perished, stand on her grave and curse her, saying—"Thou wert to blame!—thou fond,' foolish, credulous trusting soul!—thou wert to blame!—not I!"'"

If Miss Corelli was bold in attacking so vast and so controversial a subject as the tragedy of the Christ, she was none the less inspired in her conception of the situation. The description of Jesus of Nazareth, upon whom the story centres and concludes, is simplicity itself. It teaches charity, love, and brotherhood, and yet preaches humility; not humility of an universal ignorance, but that "humility" which puts even dignity in the shade, since it is dignity in another name. The pathetic touches are the cream of her story. It is not a long study, but what there is, is strange and touching with the wholesomeness of real pathos, not of one particular class, not mythical, but a tender theme as it were from a woman's tender heart, possessing the faculty of a noble sympathy

for the world's greatest tale of inimitable love and sorrow therefrom. The chapter on the resurrection is one of the highest aims of the work, and has been read frequently as a " lesson " in the Churches on Easter Day. The peculiar and idealistic spirituality of the angels at the tomb is told in a fashion distinctive of the writer. The scene of the resurrection, indeed, is worth giving in its entirety :

" A deep silence reigned. All the soldiers of the watch lay stretched on the ground unconscious, as though struck by lightning—the previous mysterious singing of the birds had ceased ; and only the lambent quivering of the wing-like glory surrounding the two angelic Messengers seemed to make an expressed though

The man Crucified and Risen, now manifested in Himself the mystic mingling of God in humanity; and taught that for the powers of the Soul set free from sin, there is no limit, no vanquishment, no end! No more eternal partings for those who on the earth should learn to love each other,—no more the withering hopelessness of despair,—the only "death" now possible to redeemed mortality being "the bondage of sin" voluntarily entered into and preferred by the unbelieving. And from this self-wrought, self-chosen doom not even a God can save!"

This appeals fully to the poetic imagination, and it seems to quicken a kind of personal interest as to the marvellous mystery of that stupendous occasion.

Marie Corelli's Christ embodies much of the human—the human that is divinely magnetic, almost, if not quite, undefinable, yet not exclusive, not idolatrous, but simply and gently *human*. The creation of the character of Jesus of Nazareth possesses no atom of bigotry. It teaches love and does not seek to embitter hate. The aura of the master character permeates each living character throughout the work. It preaches Love, Charity, and Brotherhood; it ignores the Church (*i.e.*, sectarian misnomer), so it should have, as it has through so many tongues, its mission.

There is no new creed, no new passion, no new deed under the sun to-day. There is only the

same recapitulation in a fresh garb. Our Saints still live to-day. It sounds drastic enough, but Miss Corelli feels this and knows that midst the fair field of fairness there is also the thorn and the poisonous flower any one may cull, or the simple field lily that lifts its face to heaven, and sees only heaven in its purity.

Kingsley said that "The history of England was the literature of England." Possibly so. The strong advance of women writers ever since that excellent man's passing has proved much of this. It is to the honour of women to-day. It is proved in the fine grasp of subjects, the faculty of dealing

ness, has been mystically enacted the world's one Tragedy—the tragedy of Love and Genius slain to satisfy the malice of mankind. But Love and Genius are immortal; and immortality must evermore arise, wherefore in the dark days that are coming let us not lose our courage or our hope. There will be many forms of faith,—and many human creeds in which there is no touch of the Divine,—keep we to the faithful following of Christ, and in the midst of many bewilderments we shall not wander far astray. The hour grows late,—come, thou first hermit of the Christian world!—let us go on together!'

"They descended the hill. Across the plains they passed slowly; taking the way that led towards the mystic land of Egypt, where the Pyramids lift their summits to the stars, and the Nile murmurs of the false gods forgotten. They walked in a path of roseate radiance left by a reflection of the vanished sun; and went onward steadily, never once looking back till their figures gradually diminished and disappeared. Swiftly the night gathered, and spread itself darkly over Jerusalem like a threatening shadow of storm and swift destruction; thunder was in the air, and only one pale star peeped dimly forth in the dusk, shining placidly over the Place of Tombs, where, in his quiet burial-cave, Barabbas slept beside the withering palm."

CHAPTER IX

"THE SORROWS OF SATAN,"—AS A BOOK AND AS A PLAY,—THE STORY OF THE DRAMATISATION

THE publication of "The Sorrows of Satan," in 1895, caused a greater sensation than had followed the appearance of any other work by Miss Corelli. Many presumably competent judges of literature indulged in an absolute orgie of

thinking for themselves, but who, sometimes—as in the case of Marie Corelli's publications—insist upon doing so.

Most of the critics entirely missed the point of "The Sorrows of Satan." There is a notable character in the book—Lady Sibyl Elton. Now the idea of Lady Sibyl was an allegorical one. She represented, to Marie Corelli's mind, the brilliant, indifferent, selfish, vicious impersonation of *Society offering itself body and soul to the devil.* This was completely lost sight of by most of those who criticised the book, and who had not the imagination to see *beyond* the mere *forms* of *woman* and *fiend. All* the other characters are arranged to play round this one central idea, so far as the "woman of the piece" was concerned.

It utterly surprised the author to find that people imagined that she had taken some real woman to portray, and had contrasted her badness with Mavis Clare to advertise her own excellent character against the other's blackness. Facts, however, are facts. Marie Corelli considers that the evils of society are wrought by women; hence the impersonation of Lady Sibyl as a woman, courting the devil. Secondly, she considers that the reformation of society must be wrought by women; hence the impersonation of Mavis Clare, as a woman, *repelling* the devil.

"The Sorrows of Satan" is now in its forty-third edition. The book has not only been read by representatives of all classes in all countries, but is valued and loved by many thousands who, by the wonderful power of this single pen, have been forced to *think*; and, by meditating upon the problems which make the book, have found themselves better men and women for the exercise.

"Thousands and tens of thousands throughout English-speaking Christendom," declared Father Ignatius, "will bless the author who has dared to pen the pages of 'The Sorrows of Satan'; they will bless Marie Corelli's pen, respecting its denunciation of the blasphemous verses of a

fact that the author not only has the courage which her convictions give her, but that she has the power that justifies her bravery! The book is a grand and successful attempt to show how women who are good and true hold the affection, the esteem, the devotion, the homage of men; it is an incentive to women to be in men's regard the Good Angels that men best love to believe them; it is a lesson to women how to attain the noblest heights of womanhood.

As Marie Corelli, in discussing the "Modern Marriage Market," has said, "Follies, temptations, and hypocrisies surround, in a greater or less degree, all women, whether in society or out of it; and we are none of us angels, though, to their credit be it said, some men still think us so. Some men still make 'angels' out of us, in spite of our cycling mania, our foolish 'clubs,'—where we do nothing at all,—our rough games at foot-ball and cricket, our general throwing to the winds of all dainty feminine reserve,—delicacy and modesty,—and we alone are to blame if we shatter their ideals and sit down by choice in the mud when they would have placed us on thrones."

The woman who reads and studies "The Sorrows of Satan" will desire to attain the angel ideal; and the lesson will be the better learned by the reading of this book because of the appalling

picture of Lady Sibyl Elton, whose callousness and whose *fin-de-siècle* masquerading, lying, trickery, atheism, and vice, make up an abomination in the form of Venus that is a painting of many society beauties of the day, soulless beauties whose bodies are as deliberately sold in the marriage mart as the clothes and jewels with which their damning forms are adorned.

And then in "The Sorrows of Satan" there is the unattractive personality of Geoffrey Tempest, a man with five millions of money, one of whose first declarations on the attainment of wealth is that he will give to none and lend to none, and who pursues a life of vanity, selfishness, and self-aggrandise-

indecent the better. It was pitiful advice and wholly false, for the reason that the great majority of publishers most carefully avoid works of the kind. Tempest's case is bad indeed. He must starve, because his ideas are "old-fashioned." Moreover, he cannot pay his landlady her bill. And just at this critical moment two things happen. He receives £50 from an old chum and £5,000,000 from Satan. But he is not aware of the real source from which proceeds the latter sum. Presumably it comes from an unknown uncle whose solicitors confide to the legatee that the old man had a strange idea "that he had sold himself to the devil, and that his large fortune was one result of the bargain." But who, with five millions to his name, would worry about an old man's fancies? Certainly not Geoffrey Tempest. Probably no man.

On the very night that the intimation of his good fortune reaches him, the newly made millionaire receives a call from Prince Lucio Rimânez, whose person is beautiful, whose conversation is witty to brilliance, whose wealth is unlimited, and whose age is mysterious. The meeting takes place very suitably in the dark, and the hands of the pair meet in the gloom "quite blandly and without guidance"; and we soon hear from the lips of the Prince that it is a most beautiful dispensation of nature that "honest folk should be sacrificed in order

to provide for the sustenance of knaves!" and that the devil not only drives the world whip in hand, but that he manages his team very easily.

Tempest and Rimânez forthwith become friends —even more, chums inseparable; and soon we find Mr. Geoffrey Tempest very aptly playing the part he had formerly rallied against—that of a worthless lounger with his pockets full of gold, and gluttonously swallowing the evil and corrupting maxims of his fascinating friend. He eats the best of food, drinks the most expensive of wines, and rides in the most luxurious of carriages; his book is published and advertised and boomed at his own expense, and he has not a particle of

his princely friend, makes the acquaintance of the beautiful Lady Sibyl Elton. "No man, I think, ever forgets the first time he is brought face to face with perfect beauty in woman. He may have caught fleeting glimpses of many fair faces often,—bright eyes may have flashed on him like star-beams,—the hues of a dazzling complexion may now and then have charmed him, or the seductive outlines of a graceful figure;—all these are as mere peeps into the infinite. But when such vague and passing impressions are suddenly drawn together in one focus, when all his dreamy fancies of form and colour take visible and complete manifestation in one living creature who looks down upon him, as it were, from an empyrean of untouched maiden pride and purity, it is more to his honour than his shame if his senses swoon at the ravishing vision, and he, despite his rough masculinity and brutal strength, becomes nothing but the merest slave to passion." Thus Geoffrey Tempest when the violet eyes of Sibyl Elton first rest upon him.

The scene is a box at a theatre, the play of questionable character about a "woman with a past." The picture is complete with the lady's father—the Earl of Elton—bending forward in the box and eagerly gloating over every detail of the performance. There is assuredly no exaggeration in this portraiture. Such scenes can be witnessed

y night during the season. Nor does Marie lli go beyond the unpleasing truth in asserting novels on similar themes are popular amongst en and are a sure preparation for the tolera- and applause by women of such plays.

he Earl of Elton is hard up, as his daughter vs, and she has been trained to manœuvre a rich husband. The idea of a marriage for is out of the question; she is too wary to e "the hundred gloomy consequences of the *ngusta domi*," as old Thackeray puts it. She t the sort of girl who marries where her heart with no other trust but in heaven, health, and r," to quote the same mighty moralist.

than to the less sinful sisters from whom society sweeps its skirts, the name of wanton.

Tempest loses no time in pursuing what now becomes the main object of his life—marriage with Lady Sibyl Elton, who is quite ready to be wooed. Incidentally, the book contains stirring pictures of the times. There is a visit of Tempest and Rimânez to an aristocratic gambling-house, and Miss Corelli's account of the scene there enacted is but a true description of what is going on constantly "in the West." How often, when the Somerset House records of the wills of deceased men of note are revealed, do people marvel that So-and-so, with his vast income, was able to put by so little!

Very often it is the gaming-table that supplies the reason. For the gambling fever is raging in the world of to-day from peers, statesmen, lawyers, aye, and ministers, to the street-boys who stake their trifles on a race or a game of shove-ha'penny. There are bookmakers who, as the police records show, do not hesitate to accept penny bets on horse races from boys. There are "swell" boarding-houses, we know, in secluded country retreats, where *roulette*, *rouge et noir*, and baccarat are played nightly all the year round, not for pounds, but for hundreds of pounds, and the police of the districts concerned never disturb the accursed play.

There are luxurious flats in London where similar play goes on, equally undisturbed by the police. And there are the gaming hells, such as Miss Corelli describes, where often may be seen men of distinction, whose names are familiar to every ear, destroying their peace, their prosperity, the happiness of themselves and their families for the luck of the cards.

To such a place as this—where wealth and position were the only "open sesames"—went Tempest and Prince Rimânez. Both, so rich that it mattered not to them what resulted, play and win heavily, mainly from a Viscount Lynton. Rimânez

got into the hands of the Jews. Near to Willowsmere lives Mavis Clare, the good angel of the story. It has been said "in print," and it is popularly believed even now, notwithstanding positive denial, that Mavis Clare was intended to portray Miss Marie Corelli. It was an unwarrantable and unfair suggestion, because it implied to Miss Corelli that gross libel, often falsely attributed to her, of vanity and self-advertisement. In very truth, if she were vain it would be a sin easy to condone in one who has achieved so much. Yet, happily, she is so true a woman that vanity has no part in her character, and she is incapable of deliberately applying to herself the Mavis Clare description.

In *The Review of Reviews* it was stated "that a leading figure in 'The Sorrows of Satan' was none other than the authoress herself, Marie Corelli, who, like Lucifer, the Son of Morning, also appears under a disguise. But it is a disguise so transparent that the wayfaring man, though a fool, could not fail in identifying it. Mavis Clare, whose initials it may be remarked[1] are the same as those of the authoress, represents Marie Corelli's ideal of what she would like to be, but isn't; what in her more exalted moments she imagines herself to be. It is somewhat touching to

[1] As this was obvious, the remark was unnecessary.

see this attempt at self-portraiture." The suggestion thus put forward, that Mavis Clare was a *deliberate* portrait of Miss Marie Corelli, was at once accepted by the public—be it said to the credit of the public, who, having read her books, must have been instilled with the accurate idea that the talented author must be good and true, like Mavis Clare. Colour was naturally lent to the suggestion of her deliberate self-portraiture by the similarity of the initials, and also of the circumstances of Miss Corelli and the lady of the story.

Nothing, however, was further from Miss Corelli's thoughts or intentions than this, and the similarity of the initials was purely accidental. The name was

of honour to detest the "marriage by arrangement," informs him of her knowledge that her charms are for sale and that he, Tempest, is to be the accepted purchaser. Her language is plain enough in very truth to demonstrate the hideousness of the bargain, for this is the picture of the bride-to-be that she herself draws for the edification of her future husband:

"'I ask you, do you think a girl can read the books that are now freely published, and that her silly society friends tell her to read,—"because it is so dreadfully *queer!*"—and yet remain unspoilt and innocent? Books that go into the details of the lives of outcasts?—that explain and analyse the secret vices of men?—that advocate almost as a sacred duty "free love" and universal polygamy?—that see no shame in introducing into the circles of good wives and pure-minded girls, a heroine who boldly seeks out a man, *any* man, in order that she may have a child by him, without the "degradation" of marrying him? I have read all those books, and what can you expect of me? Not innocence, surely! I despise men,—I despise my own sex,—I loathe myself for being a woman! You wonder at my fanaticism for Mavis Clare,—it is only because for a time her books give me back my self-respect, and make me see humanity in a nobler light,—because she restores to me, if only for an hour, a kind of glimmering belief in God, so that my mind feels refreshed and cleansed. All the same, you must not look upon me as an innocent young girl, Geoffrey, a girl such as the great poets idealised and sang of,—I am a contaminated

creature, trained to perfection in the lax morals and prurient literature of my day."

The unholy wedding of the selfish millionaire and Lady Sibyl Elton takes place. Prince Rimânez acts as master of the ceremonies, and calls to his aid a devil's own army of imps who work marvellous musical and picturesque effects—their identification as creatures of hell being, of course, hidden. Even thunder and lightning are called down to add to the remarkable scene. And so the marriage bargain is completed. Disillusionment quickly follows, and we find the husband and wife mutually disgusted with one another, and on the verge of hate. Lady

She falls upon her knees. And the scene thus continues :

"'With every pulse of my being I worship you!' she murmured passionately. 'My king! my god! The cruel things you say but deepen my love for you; you can kill, but you can never change me! For one kiss of your lips I would die,—for one embrace from you I would give my soul! . . .'

"'Have you one to give?' he asked derisively. 'Is it not already disposed of? You should make sure of that first! Stay where you are and let me look at you! So!—a woman, wearing a husband's name, holding a husband's honour, clothed in the very garments purchased with a husband's money, and newly risen from a husband's side, steals forth thus in the night, seeking to disgrace him and pollute herself by the vulgarest unchastity! And this is all that the culture and training of nineteenth-century civilisation can do for you? Myself, I prefer the barbaric fashion of old times, when rough savages fought for their women as they fought for their cattle, treated them as cattle, and kept them in their place, never dreaming of endowing them with such strong virtues as truth and honour! If women were pure and true, then the lost happiness of the world might return to it, but the majority of them are like you—liars—ever pretending to be what they are not. I may do what I choose with you, you say? torture you, kill you, brand you with the name of outcast in the public sight and curse you before Heaven, if I will only love you!—all this is melodramatic speech, and I never cared for melodrama at any time. I shall neither kill you, brand you, curse you, nor love you; I shall simply—call your husband!'"

After further passages of this description, concluding with some passes with a dagger, the scene ends, the hidden but listening husband coming forth and blessing the friend for his upright conduct. The inevitable follows. Lady Sibyl commits suicide; and the husband, finding the corpse seated in a chair before a mirror, carries out a plan for an awful midnight interview with the dead, turning on a blaze of lamps, and sitting down there in the death-chamber to read a document left by his wife, in which she gives a pitiful picture of the training that has made her character so repellent. She describes, in a remarkable and appalling letter, of which an extract follows,

EXISTS! And I could have found Him had I chosen, —this knowledge is forced upon me as I am torn from hence,—it is shouted at me by a thousand wailing voices! . . . too late!—too late!—the scarlet wings beat me downward,—these strange half-shapeless forms close round and drive me onward . . . to a further darkness, . . . amid wind and fire! . . . Serve me, dead hand, once more ere I depart, . . . my tortured spirit must seize and compel you to write down this thing unnameable, that earthly eyes may read, and earthly souls take timely warning! . . . I know at last WHOM I have loved!—whom I have chosen, whom I have worshipped! . . . Oh, God, have mercy! . . . I know WHO claims my worship now, and drags me into yonder rolling world of flame! . . . his name is——"

Here the manuscript ends,—incomplete and broken off abruptly,—and there is a blot on the last sentence as though the pen had been violently wrenched from the dying fingers and flung hastily down.

From this terrible incident the story hastens to its close, remarkable alike for the discourses of the Prince of Darkness, for the experiences of Tempest, for his final severance with the evil genius and his return to honest work. And here it is necessary to consider the conception of his Satanic Majesty with which the author presents us. She states that the idea came to her in the first place from the New Testament: "There I found that Christ was tempted by

Satan with the offer of thrones, principalities and powers, all of which the Saviour rejected. When the temptation was over I read that Satan left Him, and that angels came and ministered to Him. I thought this out in my own mind and I concluded that if man, through Christ, would only reject Satan, Satan would leave him, and that angels would minister to him in the same way that they ministered to Christ. Out of this germ rose the wider idea that Satan himself might be glad for men to so reject him, as he then might have the chance of recovering his lost angelic position." In fact, the writer would have it that Satan only becomes on terms of intimacy with

of love, could not in His love deny all hope of final redemption even to Satan. Truly she here gives a conception of the God of Love more attractive than the pitiless readings of the Divine character which some theologians would have us accept.

There are the two conflicting influences in the novelist's conception of the devil—Satan endeavouring to corrupt and destroy man, yet knowing that if man rejects him he is nearer to his own redemption. And so in this book we find Prince Lucio Rimânez often giving utterance to thoughts and principles which the man enslaved by him refuses to adopt and practise, as if he longed for Tempest to repel him, though helping forward all his selfish schemes. And we are given, too, the picture of this Prince of Darkness, finding that Mavis Clare could not be tempted, begging for her prayers—"*you* believe God hears you. . . . Only a pure woman can make faith possible to man. Pray for me, then, as one who has fallen from his higher and better self; who strives, but who may not attain; who labours under heavy punishment; who would fain reach Heaven, but who by the cursed will of man, and man alone, is kept in hell! Pray for me, Mavis Clare; promise it; and so shall you lift me a step nearer the glory I have lost."

Rimânez and Tempest go on a long yachting

cruise together,—to Egypt,—and during this journey the discourses of the Prince are numerous and of intense interest. In one he states that if men were true to their immortal instincts and to the God that made them,—if they were generous, honest, fearless, faithful, reverent, unselfish, . . . if women were pure, brave, tender, and loving,—then "Lucifer, Son of the Morning," lifted towards his Creator on the prayers of pure lives, would wear again his angel's crown. There is for a brief period after this a vision of the devil,—"one who, proud and rebellious, like you, errs less, in that he owns God as his Master"—as an angel. And then the yacht, steered by the demon Amiel,

shape their pride or vice demands, and am as one with all. Self finds in me another Ego;—but from the pure in heart, the high in faith, the perfect in intention, I do retreat with joy, offering naught save reverence, demanding naught save prayer! So am I—so must I ever be—till Man of his own will releases and redeems me. Mistake me not, but know me!—and choose thy Future for truth's sake and not out of fear! Choose and change not in any time hereafter,—this hour, this moment is thy last probation,—choose, I say! Wilt thou serve Self and Me? or God only?"

The choice is made. Tempest realises with shame his miserable vices, his puny scorn of God, his effronteries and blasphemies; and in the sudden strong repulsion and repudiation of his own worthless existence, being and character, he finds both voice and speech. "God only! Annihilation at His hands, rather than life without Him! God only! I have chosen!" From the brightening heaven there rings a silver voice, clear as a clarion-call,—"Arise, Lucifer, Son of the Morning! One soul rejects thee,—one hour of joy is granted thee! Hence, and arise!" And with a vision of the man fiend rushing for a brief hour to celestial regions, because of one soul that rejected Satan, Geoffrey Tempest finds himself tied to a raft on the open sea, and remembers the promise, "Him who cometh unto me will I in no wise cast out."

The late Rev. H. R. Haweis, preaching on this book, said: "'Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you,' is the grand moral carried out," and that is an opinion, notwithstanding the ban of the Romish Church, which is entertained of the book by many Christian men, by a large number of Christian clergy. It is a declaration of the Nemesis of everything that opposes itself to the will of God. The book teaches the softening influences upon mankind of good deeds done, of good words spoken. It teaches, in brief, that there are two contending powers at work upon mankind—the evil and the good; and the book

Miss Corelli has suffered in a peculiar way from the deficiencies of the law of copyright which allows perfect protection to a mechanical patent, but which gives an author no adequate protection over rights such as the dramatisation of a book. "The Sorrows of Satan," as everybody knows, was dramatised, and this is how it came about: In the year of the publication of "The Sorrows of Satan," 1895, Mr. George Eric Mackay introduced to his step-sister a lady of his acquaintance, a sculptress, who, so he said, was anxious to make a study of his head. This lady, in her turn, introduced Captain Woodgate, who expressed his enthusiastic admiration for "The Sorrows of Satan" to Miss Corelli, and said it would make a very fine play, and followed up his praise by asking whether he might try his hand at dramatising it, as he had already had some experience in the writing of plays. Miss Corelli replied that she had not thought of it at all as a play, but that she had no objection to his trying on condition that nothing was produced without her authorisation and permission. Captain Woodgate readily consented to this, but the whole subject was talked of so casually that (so Miss Corelli declares) she did not think he really meant to undertake it.

Miss Corelli was very ill at the time, and went to Scotland for her health. During her absence,

Captain Woodgate went to work, and called in the assistance of Mr. Paul Berton. Between them they wrote a play, and "The Grosvenor Syndicate" was formed for the purposes of its production.

Miss Corelli was then invited to hear the play read in the Shaftesbury Theatre green-room. Miss Evelyn Millard, selected to play the part of Lady Sibyl, was present. After the first act had been read by Mr. Paul Berton, Miss Corelli informs us that she very decidedly expressed her objection to it, and said that it would never do. Mr. Erie Mackay, who was also present, said that, on the contrary, he thought it "admirable." Miss Corelli, hearing this, remained silent while the second act

have nothing whatever to do with the play, the meeting at the Shaftesbury broke up. Mr. Lewis Waller, who had been selected for the part of Lucio Rimânez, wrote a letter to Miss Corelli in which he cordially sympathised with her on the treatment her work had received.

"The Grosvenor Syndicate" paid her five hundred pounds for the use of her name, but this sum she offered to promptly return if they would as promptly withdraw the play. Upon this the shareholders met together at the office of Miss Corelli's lawyer to discuss the matter, and Miss Corelli again proposed to give them back at once the five hundred pounds, and to write a play on her book herself. It may be added that, if she had been allowed to do this, Mr. Beerbohm Tree would have been ready and glad to consider the part of Prince Lucio. She said to those who had invested their money in the syndicate: "Gentlemen, if you will withdraw this work, I will guarantee to write you a play which shall be a success." They, however, after consideration, refused, saying that shares were issued and they could not go back. Miss Corelli, therefore, withdrew her "authorisation" altogether, and only allowed the simple use of her name on the programmes to this effect: "Dramatised from the novel of that name by Marie Corelli." The play was therefore produced for the first time at the

Shaftesbury Theatre on the evening of January 9th, 1897, in the presence of H.R.H. the Duke of Cambridge and suite, the Duke audibly expressing agreement with Miss Corelli's views of the work. She herself was not present. She was lying ill in bed, suffering acute pain, having that very day gone through a trying ordeal of surgical examination by Sir John Williams, who had bluntly informed her that she had not, perhaps, six months to live unless she went through a grave operation. It will be owned that this was a singular situation for any author, as she herself says, "To have the work of her brain dealt with in a way to which she took obvious

Miss Corelli that he put the two books together in this work "to strengthen both!"

Miss Corelli would much like to put a stop to the various stage renderings of "The Sorrows of Satan" if the law would give her the power to do so; and she would greatly like to see the law altered so as to give her and other authors such power. As it is, she now, to secure her titles, whenever she writes a book, has a play, bearing the title of her book, produced before a paying audience.

In order to secure such dramatic copyright, authors have to pay to have their "sham" play performed before a "sham" audience with "sham" actors! And the law compels it!

CHAPTER X

"THE MIGHTY ATOM" AND "BOY"

MARIE CORELLI never writes without a purpose—never solely to excite or entertain the reader who regards books as pleasant things provided for his regalement just as ices, pantomimes, and balloon ascents are.

The greatest of novelists have generally told their stories with an object other than mere story-

just as great, even though they may not be amenable to jurisdiction.

In the two books before us she deals, in hard-hitting, thought-compelling terms, with the criminally mistaken up-bringing of children. Her object in writing "The Mighty Atom" she tersely explains in her dedicatory note to "those self-styled 'progressivists'" who support the cause of education without religion. The short and pathetic history of Lionel Valliscourt is placed before us as typical of the fate which so often befalls the overwrought child-brain: the horrible end to the young life is depicted with the idea of manifesting what the absence of religion even from a boy's mind may result in. Had Lionel learned to say his prayers at his mother's knee; had he trotted off to church every Sunday morning, his hand within his father's, and at eventide listened to the sweet old Bible-stories which so appeal to a child's imagination, the Christian precepts thus implanted in his heart would surely have stayed his hand when he conceived the idea of taking his own life.

This most sad story fully brings home to the reader the evils attendant on the entirely godless teaching bestowed on a young and exceptionally bright boy, who has an instinctive yearning for that "knowledge and love of God" of which our authoress is the strenuous champion.

Lionel, the small centre of the picture, is introduced as a boy who "might have been a bank clerk or an experienced accountant in a London merchant's office, from his serious old-fashioned manner, instead of a child barely eleven years of age; indeed, as a matter of fact, there was an almost appalling expression of premature wisdom on his pale wistful features;—the 'thinking furrow' already marked his forehead,—and what should still have been the babyish upper curve of his sensitive little mouth was almost, though not quite, obliterated by a severe line of constantly practised self-restraint."

Mr. Valliscourt has hired tutor after tutor to assist

without knowing in the least what it was about, and with nobody to guide it, and having no reason, judgment, sight, or sense of its own, produced such beautiful creations? And then, if you are able to tell me where it is, will you also tell me where it came from?"

It appears that Lionel has imbibed atheistic principles not only from his father, but from a former tutor, and he is determined to thrash the matter out with the Professor, whom he takes to be the cleverest man in the world. The Professor's replies, however, are unsatisfactory, and Lionel goes on wondering.

The work continues, and he grows yet wearier. Manfully he struggles to accomplish his allotted tasks, each effort sapping his strength still further and adding to the pains which fill his head and drive sleep from his tired eyes. The Professor, acting according to orders, continues to grind the young brains to powder.

At last the crisis arrives. Under dishonourable circumstances Lionel's mother leaves her husband: over-work, sorrow, too little exercise—all these combined bring about Lionel's collapse. The plain-spoken village doctor orders him away for rest, and so the Professor and his young charge go to Clovelly, where they spend some bewilderingly delightful weeks of absolute idleness. The Pro-

fessor's eyes have been somewhat opened by Lionel's break-down to the real state of the child, whom thereafter he treats with a certain rough kindness which wins him the boy's whole heart. Lionel cannot quite make it out—but he is grateful.

"He used to show his gratitude," we are told, "in odd little ways of his own, which had a curious and softening effect on the mind of the learned Cadman-Gore. He would carefully brush the ugly hat of the great man and bring it to him,—he would pull out and smooth the large sticky fingers of his loose leather gloves and lay them side by side on a table ready for him to wear,—he would energetically polish the top of his big silver-knobbed

the boy's keenest joy to romp and talk with Jessamine, and so, on being afforded a holiday by the Professor's thoughtfulness, he proceeds with a light heart in search of his former playmate. He finds Reuben at work in the churchyard, and "the significant hollow in the ground was shaped slowly in a small dark square, to the length of a little child."

The old man's sobs betray the truth—during Lionel's absence his baby sweetheart has fallen a prey to diphtheria. The boy's anguish is terrible: the sexton's simple faith in God's way being the best way has no comfort for the helpless little pagan who has been taught that such faith as this is sheer nonsense. "No, no!" he cries; "there is no God; you have not read,—you have not studied things, and you do not know,—but you are all wrong. There is no God,—there is only the Atom which does not care."

Distracted with grief, Lionel tears away into the woods, his bewildered and weary head full of strange thoughts. At last a firm resolve takes possession of him. "I know!—I know the best way to discover the real secret,—I *must* find it out!—and I will!"

And he does. With the cool deliberation that is often a distinguishing attribute of one bent on self-destruction, he goes to bed in the usual way.

When the house is quite still, and all its other inmates are slumbering, he steals down to his school-room, where he carefully pens some letters—one to his father, another to the Professor, and a third to Mr. Montrose. This done, he falls upon his knees by the open window and prays to that Being whom he feels "must be a God, really and truly," in spite of the many learned theories to the contrary by which his child-mind has been distracted.

A little later "there came a heavy stillness, . . . and a sudden sense of cold in the air, as of the swift passing of the Shadow of Death."

One may reasonably contend that such passages as these are unnecessarily distressing, and certainly

Atom" must have brought home the truths of its straightforward doctrines to a multitude of readers. Thus can a book drop seed which is destined to flourish abundantly for a great length of time and in widely separated places. If a book be good, it will have a long life: living, its effects will be felt by more than one generation of readers. Such is the power of literature—such the strength of a mere pen when wielded by one whose principal stock-in-trade is knowledge combined with sincerity and a determination to speak out for the general weal at all hazards, and critics notwithstanding.

"Boy," a book about equal in length to "The Mighty Atom," is less picturesque in its setting than the latter, but, on the other hand, is lightened by considerable humour and happy characterisation. It is a sermon to parents. The boy, as we know, is father of the man; consequently, if you bring a boy up badly, the complete growth of him when he reaches man's estate is hardly likely to be satisfactory.

"It is a dangerous fallacy," says the author of "Boy," "to aver that every man has the making of his destiny in his own hands: to a certain extent he has, no doubt, and with education and firm resolve, he can do much to keep down the Beast

and develop the Angel ; but a terrific responsibility rests upon those often voluntarily reckless beings, his parents, who, without taking thought, use the God's privilege of giving life, while utterly failing to perceive the means offered to them for developing and preserving that life under the wisest and most harmonious conditions."

The career of the particular "boy" under notice is traced from the time when, a crawling babe, he gravely surveys his father's drunken antics and ascribes them to attacks of illness. Hence his frequent references to the "poo' sing" whose too close attentions to the bottle have earned him this mistaken infantile sympathy. "Boy's" especial

moreover, false to her—he prefers to let her live with her illusion rather than profit by acquainting her with the true facts of the case.

As the Major is generally in attendance on Miss Letitia Leslie we see a good deal of the bluff old soldier, for "Boy" is occasionally allowed to go and stay with "Miss Letty." These are the golden periods of the good maiden lady's life—and, too, of "Boy's," for while Miss Leslie cares for him properly, his mother exploits her ideas of motherhood by feeding the little fellow "on sloppy food which frequently did not agree with him, in dosing him with medicine when he was out of sorts, in dressing him anyhow, and in allowing him to amuse himself as he liked wherever he could, however he could, at all times, and in all places, dirty or clean."

Meantime, Captain the Honourable D'Arcy Muir rolls in and out of the house—more often than not in that state of drunken combativeness which finds a vent in assaulting mantelpiece ornaments and the lighter articles of furniture—and Mrs. D'Arcy Muir reads novels, or, studying personal ease before appearance, slouches about the house in soft felt slippers and loosely fitting garments which frequently lack a sufficiency of buttons and hooks.

In spite of such surroundings "Boy" remains a very lovable little fellow until he goes to school.

Then Miss Letty and the Major lose sight of him for a long period, for he is sent to a school in Brittany. The Major deplores the fact: "You must say good-bye to 'Boy' for ever! . . . Don't you see? The child has gone—and he'll never come back. *A* boy will come back, but not the boy *you* knew. The boy you knew is practically dead. . . . The poor little chap had enough against him in his home surroundings, God knows!—but a cheap foreign school is the last straw on the camel's back. Whatever is good in his nature will go to waste; whatever is bad will grow and flourish!"

As it happens, "Boy" only stays in France a year, but during that period Miss Letty, the Major, and

is exceedingly well done, "Boy's" stolid, *blasé* replies to the many questions he is asked being exceedingly diverting, although one feels sorry to see what an automaton he has grown into.

"Are you glad you are going to be a soldier?" the Major asks him. "Oh, I don't mind it!" says "Boy." "Are you fond of flowers?" the girl demands of him a little later. "I don't mind them much!" replies "Boy" indifferently. "Well, what *do* you mind? Anything?" puts in the Major. "Boy" laughed. "I don't know."

This scene—from which we have merely extracted a few remarks—is in its way an excellent bit of comedy, but on behalf of public schoolboys generally we must say that we don't think "Boy" would have put his hat on—as he is reported to have done—while still in the room with the ladies.

"Boy" passes into Sandhurst, but is expelled therefrom for drunkenness; he gets a clerkship, incurs card debts, alters the amount on a cheque which Miss Letty has sent him, repents of the fraud, returns the whole amount, with a manly apology, to Miss Letty, enlists, and is killed by the Boers. That, then, is the sad end of "Boy."

In addition to the characters mentioned there are others of subsidiary importance, and there is, threading in and out of the "Boy" episodes, a love-story which ends tragically, at the time, for

the Major's niece, though she eventually meets the man Fate has decreed she shall marry on a South African battlefield.

In no other book has Miss Corelli favoured us with so many smile-provoking passages. There is, for instance, a good deal of grim humour about "Rattling Jack"—the salt-dried veteran of whom "Boy" makes a friend when the D'Arcy Muirs move from their London home in Hereford Square to cheaper quarters on the coast.

Rattling Jack doesn't sympathise with the elementary methods of the young student of natural history. He doesn't see why beetles and butterflies should be trapped and carried home for the

they pulls 'em off their rocks and carries 'em off in a mean little tin pail! Ay, ay, ye may call a tin pail whatever ye please—a pile o' money or a pile o' love—it's naught but a tin pail—not a rock with the sun shinin' upon it. And o' coorse they dies—there ain't no sense in livin' in a tin pail.'"

This weary-wise old fellow must be credited to Miss Corelli as one of her best portraits in miniature. His observations are full of sage and seasoning, and we could do with more of him.

Did Miss Corelli's themes allow of it, we might have been treated to a good deal more humour in her works, but she is too good an artist to intrude comic relief when such relief would merely be an annoying interruption. But various passages in her books show her to be the possessor of a considerable sense of the laughable, and it is to be hoped that she will some day find time to write a story dealing with the lighter side of existence.

CHAPTER XI

"*THE MURDER OF DELICIA*" AND "*ZISKA*" [1]

IN the former of these works Marie Corelli has much to say about men that is very disagreeable and, as it appears to us, only partially true. It would seem that the novelist is too prone to seize upon a particular instance of "man's ingratitude," laziness, cruelty, and general worthlessness, and set it up as a frequently occurring type.

Now surely this is an over-statement which will not strengthen Marie Corelli's case. We grant that a certain number of men marry for money, and that the women they so marry are only too glad to be married on those or any terms; but the social conditions of this era have not become so cankered as to lead the "great majority of men" to seek a livelihood at the altar steps! Would it not be altogether more reasonable to substitute "a certain minority" for "a great majority"? In fairness to the novelist, we must add that her remarks on this subject apply principally to the aristocracy. The worthy lover or husband of the middle classes may therefore breathe again.

Nevertheless, we will venture to present the other aspect of this matter of marrying for money. It is well known that many a wealthy woman languishes in virgin solitude on account of those very shekels of gold and shekels of silver which she possesseth, while her penniless girl-friends are donning their marital veils and going through the sweet old business of marrying and being given in marriage. This applies to the upper as well as to the lower ranks of society.

Many a man—aye, many a guardsman—would now be a happy Benedict had a certain girl of "once upon a time" been possessed of no riches save the

inestimable wealth of a loving heart, no diamonds except those shining in her eyes, no pearls but what one might see when her lips parted in shy smile or merry laughter.

For the average man—be his rank high or low—loves a woman, as the saying is, for herself. While recognising the value and usefulness of money, while raising no objection should his father-in-law allow the young wife pin-money, the average man who marries in the ordinary way sets little store on what his bride brings him in the shape of earthly dross.

It is, however, imcumbent on a writer of con-

arithmetic they may be endowed with to reckoning up exactly what pecuniary advantages shall accrue to them if they marry Jack Jones, or, failing Jack Jones, John Smith! And a cross-Channel *père de famille* would tell you that they are quite right to do this, that, indeed, if they were his daughters, he would do it for them, and have the whole thing put down in black and white at a notary's office.

But—thank Heaven!—we are a little more sentimental on this side of the narrow strip of silver sea. We still believe in the love marriage, and so an approving Dame Nature gives us healthy sons and daughters for the regular renewal of the nation's strength. Whereas in la belle France, with her businesslike matrimonial alliances, they have to offer prizes for babies! Truly a pathetic endeavour to stem a national decay!

"The Murder of Delicia" is a short story, soon told. Lord Carlyon takes a strong fancy to Delicia Vaughan, the popular and beautiful lady novelist, and his liking is returned tenfold. They marry, and Delicia supplies him with money for his clothes, club expenses, cabs, and card games. Were it not that we are aware that even the wisest of women may, in spite of their wisdom, love unwisely, we should marvel at a woman of Delicia Vaughan's intellectual gifts (which were coupled, we may presume, with the keen insight into human nature that a

novelist should possess) marrying a man of the Lord Carlyon type—a big, handsome animal, whose conversation must have afforded her very little entertainment. She loved him because to her (to quote the book) he was a "strong, splendid, bold, athletic, masterful creature who was hers—hers only!" Is it possible that a woman of Delicia Vaughan's alleged intelligence would have fallen so completely in love with a man who "was absolutely devoid of all ambition, save a desire to have his surname pronounced correctly"? Truly, a dull dog—yet Delicia worshipped him. She disregarded the apostolic command to little children not to take unto themselves idols. She doted on this man of inches

the end, to threatening him with a revolver when he would have healed their differences with a kiss.

The book, as its title implies, ends sadly. How sadly, those who have read it will know, and those who may read it hereafter will soon discover, for it is quite a little book, and its price but a florin.

"These are the people," writes Marie Corelli in "Ziska," alluding to the tourists assembled in Cairo, "who usually leave England on the plea of being unable to stand the cheery, frosty, and in every respect healthy winter of their native country—

"that winter, which with its wild winds, its sparkling frost and snow, its holly trees bright with scarlet berries, its merry hunters galloping over field and moor during daylight hours, and its great log fires roaring up the chimneys at evening, was sufficiently good for their forefathers to thrive upon and live through contentedly up to a hale and hearty old age in the times when the fever of travelling from place to place was an unknown disease, and home was indeed 'sweet home.' Infected by strange maladies of the blood and nerves, to which even scientific physicians find it hard to give suitable names, they shudder at the first whiff of cold, and, filling huge trunks with a thousand foolish things which have, through luxurious habit, become necessities to their pallid existences, they hastily depart to the Land of the Sun, carrying with them their nameless languors, discontents, and incurable illnesses, for which Heaven itself, much less Egypt, could provide no remedy."

Be that as it may, the tourists assembled at the

Gezireh Palace Hotel one winter were treated to a vision of loveliness which for a time made them momentarily forget their nameless languors in spells of admiration and envy, according to the sex which claimed them, the vision in question taking an apparently human shape in the person of the Princess Ziska.

Reputedly a Russian lady, Ziska was in reality the flesh-clad ghost of Ziska-Charmazel, the favourite of the harem of a great Egyptian warrior, described in forgotten histories as "The Mighty Araxes." Visiting Egypt at the same time as the Princess was Armand Gervase, a French painter of great renown, and the interest of the story may be

have once entertained for the Scottish girl. "How was I to know," cries Armand, "that this horrible thing would happen?" "What horrible thing?" inquires Helen.

"'This,' he answered, 'the close and pernicious enthralment of a woman I never met till the night before last; a woman whose face haunts me; a woman who drags me to her side with the force of a magnet, there to grovel like a brain-sick fool and plead with her for a love which I already know is poison to my soul! Helen, Helen! You do not understand—you will never understand! Here, in the very air I breathe, I fancy I can trace the perfume she shakes from her garments as she moves; something indescribably fascinating yet terrible attracts me to her; it is an evil attraction, I know, but I cannot resist it. There is something wicked in every man's nature; I am conscious enough that there is something detestably wicked in mine, and I have not sufficient goodness to overbalance it. And this woman,—this silent, gliding, glittering-eyed creature that has suddenly taken possession of my fancy—she overcomes me in spite of myself; she makes havoc of all the good intentions of my life. I admit—I confess it!'"

Unfortunately, the painter's very good friend, Denzil Murray, also becomes inspired with a passion for Ziska, and the lad's temper is roused when Armand openly admits that his intentions with regard to the Princess are strictly dishonourable. Murray suggests that it were well Ziska should know this, but Armand laughs at the other's idea

that the bringing of such tidings to Ziska's ears would lower him one jot in that lovely lady's estimation :

"'My good boy, do you not know that there is something very marvellous in the attraction we call love? It is a pre-ordained destiny,—and if one soul is so constituted that it must meet and mix with another, nothing can hinder the operation. So that, believe me, I am quite indifferent as to what you say of me to Madame la Princesse or to any one else. It will not be for either my looks or my character that she will love me, if, indeed, she ever does love me; it will be for something indistinct, indefinable, but resistless in us both, which no one on earth can explain.'"

The hot-headed young Highlander, however,

Photo by] [*Miss B. Vyver.*

KILLIECRANKIE COTTAGE, WHERE "ZISKA" WAS FINISHED.

Photo by] [*Miss B. Vyver.*

AVON CROFT, WHERE "THE MASTER CHRISTIAN" WAS FINISHED, 1900.

[*To face p.* 200.

the dramatic outbursts of Ziska when she scornfully taunts the painter with his vileness.

In conversation with the Doctor, Gervase Armand admits that there is something about Ziska which has struck him as being familiar. "The tone of her voice and the peculiar cadence of her laughter" affect him peculiarly. When he wonders whether he has ever come across her before as a model either in Paris or Rome, the Doctor shakes his head. "Think again," he says. "You are now a man in the prime of life, Monsieur Gervase, but look back to your early youth,—the period when young men do wild, reckless, and often wicked things,—did you ever in that thoughtless time break a woman's heart?"

Armand admits that he may have done so, and the Doctor propounds his theory:

"'Suppose that you, in your boyhood, had wronged some woman, and suppose that woman had died. You might imagine that you had got rid of that woman. But if her love was very strong and her sense of outrage very bitter, I must tell you that you have not got rid of her by any means; moreover, you never will get rid of her. And why? Because her Soul, like all Souls, is imperishable. Now, putting it as a mere supposition, and for the sake of the argument, that you feel a certain admiration for the Princess Ziska, an admiration which might possibly deepen into something more than platonic, . . .'—here Denzil Murray looked up, his eyes glowing with an angry pain as he fixed

them on Gervase,—'why, then the Soul of the other woman you once wronged might come between you and the face of the new attraction and cause you to unconsciously paint the tortured look of the injured and unforgiving Spirit on the countenance of the lovely fascinator whose charms are just beginning to ensnare you. I repeat, I have known such cases.'"

For it should be explained that, when Ziska gave the celebrated painter a sitting, he could produce nothing on his canvas, in spite of his genius, but a strange and awful face distorted with passion and pain, agony in every line of the features—"agony in which the traces of a divine beauty lingered only to render the whole countenance more repellent and terrific."

one thing nor the other, and reject the Redemption that does away with both! God forgive us all our sins—and especially the sins of pride and presumption!'"

Other of the Doctor's thoughtful utterances are well worth quoting. "To the wise student of things there is no time and no distance. All history from the very beginning is like a wonderful chain in which no link is ever really broken, and in which every part fits closely to the other part,—though why the chain should exist at all is a mystery we cannot solve. Yet, I am quite certain that even our late friend Araxes has his connection with the present, if only for the reason that he lived in the past."

Armand asks him how he argues out that theory, and the Doctor replies:

"'The question is, how can you argue at all about anything that is so plain and demonstrated a fact? The doctrine of evolution proves it. Everything that we were once has its part in us now. Suppose, if you like, that we were originally no more than shells on the shore,—some remnant of the nature of the shell must be in us at this moment. Nothing is lost,—nothing is wasted,—not even a thought. I carry my theories very far indeed, especially in regard to matters of love. I maintain that if it is decreed that the soul of a man and the soul of a woman must meet,—must rush together,—not all the forces of the universe can hinder them; aye, even if they were, for some conventional cause or circumstance, themselves reluctant to consummate their

destiny, it would, nevertheless, despite them, be consummated. For mark you,—in some form or other they have rushed together before! Whether as flames in the air, or twining leaves on a tree, or flowers in a field, they have felt the sweetness and fitness of each other's being in former lives,—and the craving sense of that sweetness and fitness can never be done away with,—never! Not as long as this present universe lasts! It is a terrible thing,' continued the Doctor in a lower tone, 'a terrible fatality,—the desire of love. In some cases it is a curse; in others, a divine and priceless blessing. The results depend entirely on the temperaments of the human creatures possessed by its fever. When it kindles, rises, and burns towards Heaven in a steady flame of ever-brightening purity and faith, then it makes marriage the most perfect union on earth,—the sweetest and most blessed com-

and in his case it is clear that her interest has a malignant foundation.

Armand comes after him, and, in a passionate scene, audaciously proposes to "play the part of Araxes over again." Ziska promises to give him her answer on the morrow, and on the morrow Armand receives it.

The last scene of this "Problem of a Wicked Soul" takes place beneath the Great Pyramid. Why and how the modern Araxes and the modern Ziska-Charmazel come together in the end in this strangest of meeting-places, we will leave the reader to discover for him or herself.

But we may at least record our admiration for the feat of imagination of which "Ziska" is the result, and indicate the lesson that is to be learned from its pages. "Ziska" teaches that sin shall not escape punishment, that a man shall not play fast and loose with women's hearts and yet go scot free. "Ziska" shows how the mutilated soul of the beautiful dancer arises after many centuries and exacts vengeance from its enemy; and again "Ziska" shows how, when Araxes, in his modern painter guise, cries for pardon, the eyes of his one-time victim soften and flash with love and tenderness.

Truly a fragrant passage is this, wherein the old story is once again told of man's repentance and woman's sweet forgiveness.

CHAPTER XII

"THE MASTER CHRISTIAN,"—IF CHRIST CAME TO ROME!

THERE had been a considerable pause in the writings of Miss Corelli, for reasons which have already been discussed, when, in August, 1900, "The Master Christian" appeared.

Miss Corelli commenced "The Master Christian"

she did not resume "The Master Christian" till the spring of 1899.

"The Master Christian" is Marie Corelli's longest work, containing, as it does, over six hundred and thirty-four closely printed pages. While occupied upon it, the novelist had also to fulfil a long-standing engagement with Messrs. Hutchinson & Co. "Boy" and "The Master Christian" were, therefore, claiming her attention practically at the same time.

The writing of the two books under the circumstances was a stupendous undertaking. The effort required was so great that she often had to lay down her pen and lean back in her chair almost fainting from nervous exhaustion caused by the severity of the work and its effect upon her in her still weak condition.

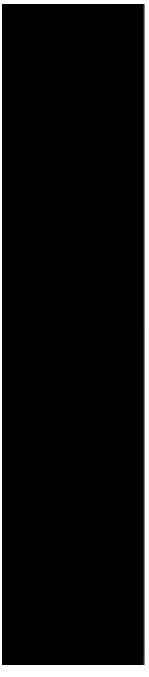
It is a painfully interesting proceeding to read "The Master Christian" and then a large number of the reviews of the book which appeared. The conclusion is forced upon one that many of the critics had not taken the trouble to perform the obvious duty of reading a book that was to be "slated," but had merely glanced at a page here and quoted a passage, without the context, there. Either this was what happened or there was misconception of the book through ignorance or deliberate misrepresentation. It is really astounding

to realise the manner in which Miss Corelli has been "criticised," and one notable incident of many within our experience will serve to indicate what is a too frequent sin.

It was at the dinner of a well-known literary club, and ladies had been invited. One lady sat beside a gentleman who, years ago, was editor of a great daily newspaper, whose name is familiar to all as a notable and experienced journalist and critic, and who has arrived at an age when discretion, if not fairness, should be practised. The lady was a friend of Marie Corelli's, and upon the works of the novelist, who was also at the dinner, the conversation turned. The critic expressed

HALL'S CROFT, WHERE MISS MARIE CORELLI WROTE HALF OF "THE MASTER CHRISTIAN," 1900.

[*To face p.* 203.



and asked him if he had really *meant* his apparently generous praise.

He wrote back:

"I said it; I wrote it; I meant it, every word of it. 'Press cuttings' be blowed!

"Yours, F. C. BURNAND."

One writer in the *Sunday Sun* observed that as Burnand had fallen so low as to praise a work of Marie Corelli's, he had "no other remedy but to take a bag of stones and break Mr. Punch's windows!" He added that "he had not read 'Boy' and *didn't intend to.*" Again, comment would be superfluous. The facts speak for themselves and show our contention to be correct, *i.e.*, that condemnatory criticisms of Marie Corelli's books are written at times by those who do not even read them.

One of the critics who does read what he comments upon in the way of books, but who, though a deep thinker, is sometimes trivial, superficial, and even frivolous in his treatment of a subject, is Mr. W. T. Stead. He is as amazing to others as others very often are to him. He must, we think, have been smiling pretty broadly when he wrote: "If any one wants to know what 'The Master Christian' is like, *without reading its six hundred and thirty pages*, he will not have much difficulty if he takes Sheldon's 'In His Steps,'

Zola's 'Rome,' and any of Marie Corelli's previous novels in equal proportion." A strange suggestion, that! "In His Steps," Zola's "Rome," and an equal proportion of, say, *either* "Vendetta" or "The Sorrows of Satan!" Reading the book itself seems to be so much more simple—and just.

Again, Mr. Stead referred to "The Master Christian" and to Mrs. Humphry Ward's "Robert Elsmere," and speaking of their great success, he wrote: "The phenomenal sale of such works is perhaps much more worthy of consideration than anything that is to be found within the covers of the books themselves." Now the matter for

is Manuel, Christ once more in the world in the form of a child, and if his utterances show a "lack of sympathy,"—with lies and superstitious idolatry,—yet he speaks largely from the words of Christ and the Apostles. Well may it be doubted, with the author, whether, if Christ came once more to earth, he would be welcome.

It is said again that "The Master Christian" is a bitter attack upon the Roman Catholic Faith. It is nothing of the kind. After Manuel, the child-Christ, the chief character is that of Cardinal Bonpré, who is devoted to the Church of Rome, but who also believes in Christ, and the two things, unhappily, are not always akin. If the man-made portion of the Roman Catholic dogma has hidden the teachings of Christ on which that Church was founded, that is the fault and the misfortune of the Church of Rome, and not of Marie Corelli, who is bold enough to speak the truth about the matter. That faith in God which is her stand-by is what she would wish to see in the ministry of the Roman Catholic Church, instead of, as she fears, a mere degenerate, priest-built, superstitious reliance upon symbolic shams.

Marie Corelli's personal views may be taken to be those to which one of her characters, Aubrey Leigh, gives expression: "I never denied the beauty, romance, or mysticism of the Roman Catholic Faith.

If it were purified from the accumulated superstition of ages, and freed from intolerance and bigotry, it would perhaps be the grandest form of Christianity in the world. But the rats are in the house, and the rooms want cleaning." She attacks neither the Roman Catholic Faith nor even the Church. She makes a terrible onslaught upon the rats.

"The Master Christian" is both a novel and a sermon. The story of the book is intensely interesting, in "plot" clever and original. It is one of the refreshing features of Miss Corelli's books that the plots always are original. She does not go to the British Museum or the productions of Con-

With "The Master Christian" the reader has to think all the time. It is a sermon of great power, and the text of it is supplied, as it should be, by the fair preacher. It will be remembered that in the year 1900 the late Dr. St. George Mivart, a priest of the Church of Rome, was inhibited by His Eminence Cardinal Vaughan, on account of certain scientific works which were displeasing to the Church. Shortly afterwards Dr. Mivart died, and the Romish Church even denied him religious rites of burial. In an "In Memoriam" note appended to her "open letter" to Cardinal Vaughan on this subject, Marie Corelli wrote: "In the name of the all-loving and merciful Christ, whose teachings we, as Christians, profess to follow, it is necessary to enter a strong protest against this barbarous act in a civilised age, and to set it down beside the blind stupidity which arraigned glorious Galileo, and the fiendish cruelty which supported Torquemada. For the words of the Divine Master are a command to Churches as well as to individuals: 'If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive you your trespasses!'"

We wonder if that saying of Christ's was remembered when the ban of excommunication was pronounced by the Greek Church against Count Leo Tolstoy! We wonder if that saying of Christ's

is remembered at Rome when any ban of excommunication is passed, when religious rites of burial are denied to any man! And if the reply be that the words do not apply because the Pope and his priests commit no trespasses, we can only wonder what Christ would say if He came to Rome; and, further, we believe that He would say much that the child-Christ Manuel utters in "The Master Christian."

The text of the book is that charity and forgiveness—the carrying out of Christ's commands in the spirit of the Saviour—should guide mankind to-day, that they apply to-day as they did in the days of Christ's sojourn on earth, and that the conditions

Life," in words of such plain and uninvolved meaning, that the poorest and least educated of us all cannot but understand Him. Gracious, tender, and always patient and pardoning, was every utterance of the God amongst us; and among all His wise and consoling sayings, none are, perhaps, more widely tolerant than this: "If any man hear My words and believe not, I judge him not; for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world." My Lord Cardinal, there are many at this time of day who have so gained in a reasonable conception of faith, that when they hear the words of Christ delivered to them simply as first uttered, they are willing to believe, but hearing the edicts of the Church contrasted with those words, they "believe not." The teachings of Christ—Christ only—are so true that they cannot be denied; so beautiful that they command our reverence; and the Creed of Christ, if honestly followed, would make a fair and happy world for us all.'"

And again,

"'We are somewhat bewildered when we discover, by reference to the Gospel, that the Church commands us frequently to do precisely what the founder of our Faith commanded us *not* to do. And what, we may ask, is the Will of this great Father which is in Heaven? Is it to swear to what our own conscience and reason declare to be false? Is it to look in the face of Science, the great Heaven-sent Teacher of our time, and say, "You who have taught me, mere pigmy man, to press the lightning into my service, to take the weight and measurement of stars, to send my trifling messages of weal or woe on the eternal currents of electric force—You, who daily unfold

for me the mysteries of God's glorious creation—You who teach me that the soul of man, immortal and progressive, is capable of infinite enlightenment and increasing power—You, who expound the majesty, the beneficence, the care, the love, the supporting influence of the Creator, and bring me to my knees in devout adoration—am I to say to You who teach me all this that You are a Lie? Am I rather to believe that a statue made by hands, and set in a grotto at Lourdes or elsewhere, is a worthier object for my prayer and my praise? Am I doing God's will by believing that my base coin, paid for sundry masses in churches, will sway the Creator of the Universe to give peace to the departed spirits of my dead?"[1]"

Marie Corelli, by the words of Manuel, as we think it is recognised, gives a truer interpretation of the Divine Will. Even the title-page contains

world, of which he has seen little, is faring, "whether on the downward road to destruction and death, or up to the high ascents of progress and life." The farther he travels the more depressed he becomes by the results of his observations. Within Rouen Cathedral Cardinal Bonpré hears singularly soothing music, though whence it comes he is unable to perceive. He is impressed with a peculiar sense of some Divine declaration of God's absolute omniscience, and a question seems to be whispered in his ears:

"When the Son of Man cometh, think ye He shall find faith on earth?"

With his growing experience of the confusion and trouble of the world, the Cardinal is forced to the conclusion that there is an increasing lack of faith in God and a Hereafter; and of the reason for it he thinks: "We have failed to follow the Master's teaching in its true perfection. We have planted in ourselves a seed of corruption, and we have permitted—nay, some of us have encouraged—its poisonous growth till it now threatens to contaminate the whole field of labour."

Cast down by these reflections, the good Cardinal proceeds to the Hôtel Poitiers, a modest hostelry preferred by him to the Palace of the Archbishop of Rouen, another "Prince of the Church," a term which Cardinal Bonpré—like Miss Corelli—finds particularly detestable, especially when used in connection

with a Christian Church wherein she thinks distinctive ranks are a mistake and even anti-Christian.

At the inn a striking picture is drawn by the novelist of the evil effect upon the children of France brought about by the removal of religious instruction from the schools. The two charmingly precocious children of Jean and Madame Patoux are quite old in agnostic views and doubts. There also Bonpré has his first serious religious argument with the Archbishop of Rouen, whom he astonishes by declaring that the Church herself is responsible for the increase of ungodliness.

"'If our Divine faith were lived Divinely there would be no room for heresy or atheism. The Church itself

decry St. Paul. He was a gifted and clever man, but he was a Man—he was not God-in-Man. Christ's doctrine leaves no place for differing sects; St. Paul's method of applying that doctrine serves as authority for the establishment of any and every quarrelsome sect ever known. . . . I do not think we fit the Church system to the needs of modern civilisation . . . we only offer vague hopes and dubious promises to those who thirst for the living waters of salvation and immortality.'"

Cardinal Bonpré that night has a vision of the end of the world, and in his agony at the spectacle he cries: "Have patience yet, thou outraged and blasphemed Creator! Break once again thy silence as of old, and speak to us! Pity us once again, ere Thou slay us utterly! Come to us even as Thou camest in Judea, and surely we will receive Thee and obey Thee, and reject Thy love no more." And a Divine voice replies: "Thy prayer is heard, and once again the silence shall be broken. Nevertheless, remember that the light shineth in Darkness, and the Darkness comprehendeth it not." At this juncture a plaintive cry falls on his ears, and he goes out into the night to discover the cause. He proceeds to the Cathedral, and there, in the deeply hollowed portal, discovers the slight shrinking figure of a child—

"A boy's desolate little figure,—with uplifted hands clasped appealingly and laid against the shut Cathedral

door, and face hidden and pressed hard upon those hands, as though in mute and inconsolable despair. . . .

"'My poor child, what troubles you? Why are you here all alone, and weeping at this late hour? Have you no home?—no parents?'

"Slowly the boy turned round, still resting his small delicate hands against the oaken door of the Cathedral, and with the tears yet wet upon his cheeks, smiled. What a sad face he had!—worn and weary, yet beautiful!—what eyes, heavy with the dews of sorrow, yet tender even in pain! Startled by the mingled purity and grief of so young a countenance, the Cardinal retreated for a moment in amaze,—then, approaching more closely, he repeated his former question with increased interest and tenderness—

"'Why are you weeping here alone?'

"'Because I am left alone to weep!' said the boy,

Manuel is then taken entirely under the protection of Cardinal Bonpré, and the two become inseparable. At all times the lad talks with wonderful eloquence and power—as Marie Corelli thinks Christ would talk if He were a child amongst us, and as He did talk when astonishing the learned doctors of law in Jerusalem. Before he and the Cardinal leave the Hôtel Poitiers a miracle is performed. In Rouen there is a lad, Fabien Doucet, who has a bent spine and a useless leg. The unbelieving Patoux youngsters bring little Fabien to the Cardinal, and ask him to cure the lad. Beside the Cardinal stands Manuel. The incident is introduced by Marie Corelli in order to emphasise her own belief in the power of prayer—prayer that is sincere, the expression of faith that is true. The story of the miracle is very beautiful, especially for the spirit in which the good Cardinal performs the duty that the children ask of him. He addresses Fabien:

"'My poor child, I want you to understand quite clearly how sorry I am for you, and how willingly I would do anything in the world to make you a strong, well, and happy boy. But you must not fancy that I can cure you. I told your little friends yesterday that I was not a saint, such as you read about in story-books,—and that I could not work miracles, because I am not worthy to be so filled with the Divine Spirit

as to heal with a touch like the better servants of our Blessed Lord. Nevertheless I firmly believe that if God saw that it was good for you to be strong and well, He would find ways to make you so. Sometimes sickness and sorrow are sent to us for our advantage,—sometimes even death comes to us for our larger benefit, though we may not understand how it is so till afterwards. But in heaven everything will be made clear; and even our griefs will be turned into joys,—do you understand?'

"'Yes,' murmured Fabien gravely, but two large tears welled up in his plaintive eyes as the faint glimmer of hope he had encouraged as to the possibility of his being miraculously cured by the touch of a saintly Cardinal, expired in the lonely darkness of his little afflicted soul.

"'That is well,' continued the Cardinal kindly—'and

passion, whose sole immortal desire was to lift the burden of sorrow and pain from the lives of suffering humanity. And after a minute or two passed in silent meditation, the Cardinal laid his hands tenderly on Fabien's fair curly head and prayed aloud.

"'O merciful Christ! Most pitying and gentle Redeemer!—to Whom in the days of Thy sacred life on earth, the sick and suffering and lame and blind were brought, and never sent away unhealed or uncomforted; consider, we beseech Thee, the sufferings of this Thy little child, deprived of all the joys which Thou hast made so sweet for those who are strong and straight in their youth, and who have no ailment to depress their courage or to quench the ardour of their aspiring souls. Look compassionately upon him, O gentle King and Master of all such children!—and even as Thou wert a child Thyself, be pleased to heal him of his sad infirmity. For, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make this bent body straight and these withered muscles strong,—from death itself Thou canst ordain life, and nothing is impossible to Thee! But above all things, gracious Saviour, we do pray Thee so to lift and strengthen this child's soul, that if it is destined he should still be called upon to bear his present pain and trouble, grant to him such perfection in his inward spirit that he may prove worthy to be counted among Thy angels in the bright Hereafter. To Thy care, and to Thy comfort, and to Thy healing, great Master, we commend him, trusting him entirely to Thy mercy, with perfect resignation to Thy Divine Will. For the sake and memory of Thy most holy childhood mercifully help and bless this child! Amen!'"

As Fabien Doucet hobbles away at the conclusion

of this prayer, the Cardinal, speaking from his heart, declares that if the giving of his own life could make the lad strong he would willingly sacrifice it. Then Manuel moves from his place near the Cardinal's chair, approaches the little cripple, and, putting his arms round him, kisses him on the forehead.

"'Good-bye, dear little brother!' he said, smiling—'Do not be sad! Have patience! In all the universe, among all the millions and millions of worlds, there is never a pure and unselfish prayer that the great good God does not answer! Be sure of that! Take courage, dear little brother! You will soon be well!'"

Sweet assurance, truly, for the afflicted one.

able character is the Abbé Vergniaud, a brilliant preacher, witty, eloquent, and sarcastic, but an atheist for all that. In his conversations with Angela he endeavours to justify his position, but the girl insists upon the depressing and wretched nature of his soulless creed. Vergniaud frankly admits his unbelief to Cardinal Bonpré. He also makes a confession and a declaration. In his early days, twenty-five years before, he had betrayed and deserted a woman, long since dead. Her son, however, has grown to manhood with the determination to avenge the mother's wrong, and the Abbé goes in daily fear of assassination at his hands. Yet the Abbé Vergniaud shows that he is far from being a wholly evil man. He declares his determination to retrieve the past so far as he can and to clear his son's soul from the thirst for vengeance that is consuming it.

On one occasion Vergniaud declares that Paris is hopelessly pagan, that Christ is there made the subject of public caricature, that His reign is over—in Paris at least.

"'If these things be true,' Cardinal Bonpré indignantly cries, 'then shame upon you and upon all the clergy of this unhappy city to stand by and let such disgrace to yourselves, and blasphemy to our Master, exist without protest.'"

The Abbé is inclined to resent the rebuke, but

only for a moment. The next, abashed, he admits its justice, and craves pardon. The incident is the turning point in Vergniaud's life. He shortly afterwards writes to the Cardinal that he is moved to say things that he has never said before, and that it is possible he may astonish and perchance scandalise Paris.

"'What inspires me I do not know,—perhaps your well-deserved reproach of the other day,—perhaps the beautiful smile of the angel that dwells in Donna Sovrani's eyes,—perhaps the chance meeting with your Rouen foundling on the stairs as I was flying away from your just wrath.'"

He concludes by requesting the Cardinal to come

though she longed to gather the flower for herself she would not do so, but always placed it before the picture of the Christ. And God saw her do this, as He sees everything. At last, quite suddenly, she died, and when she found herself in Heaven, there were such crowds and crowds of angels about her that she was bewildered, and could not find her way. All at once she saw a pathway edged with roses before her, and one of the angels said, "There are all the roses you gave to our Lord on earth, and He has made them into a pathway for you which will lead you straight to those you love!" And so with great joy she followed the windings of the path, seeing her roses blossoming all the way, and she found all those whom she had loved and lost on earth waiting to welcome her at the end!'"

Here is another sweet thought which Marie Corelli gives us in the words of Manuel:

"'You know now,' he tells Angela Sovrani, 'because your wise men are beginning to prove it, that you can in very truth send a message to Heaven. Heaven is composed of millions of worlds. "In My Father's house are many mansions!" And from all worlds to all worlds, and from mansion to mansion, the messages flash! And there are those who receive them, with such directness as can admit of no error! And your wise men might have known this long ago if they had believed their Master's word, "Whatsoever is whispered in secret shall be proclaimed on the housetops." But you will all find out soon that it is true, and that everything you say, and that every prayer you utter, God hears.'

"'My mother is in Heaven,' said Angela wistfully, 'I wish I could send her a message!'"

"'Your very wish has reached her now!' said Manuel. 'How is it possible that you, in the spirit, could wish to communicate with one so beloved and she not know it? Love would be no use then, and there would be a grave flaw in God's perfect creation.'

"'Then you think we never lose those we love? And that they see us and hear us always?'

"'They must do so,' said Manuel, 'otherwise there would be cruelty in creating the grace of love at all. But God Himself is Love. Those who love truly can never be parted—death has no power over their souls. If one is on earth and one in Heaven, what does it matter? If they were in separate countries of the world they could hear news of each other from time to time,—and so they can when apparent death has divided them.'

"'How?' asked Angela with quick interest.

CHAPTER XIII

"*THE MASTER CHRISTIAN*"—(*continued*)

OF many interesting incidents which mark the Cardinal's stay in Paris the most sensational is the sermon of the Abbé Vergniaud and the extraordinary scene at its close.

Marie Corelli gives a wonderfully realistic word-picture of the scene in the famous church on a notable occasion. The Abbé's sermon, which appears in its entirety, is scathingly sarcastic. In it he bitterly denounces the hypocrisy alike of people and of Churches, especially the Roman Catholic Church, which he attacks for the ban it places upon many things, even discussion; he declares that all the intellectual force of the country is arrayed against priestcraft, and that the spirit of an insolent, witty, domineering atheism and materialism rules us all. "But what I specially wish to advise you—taking myself as an example—is, that none of you, whether inclined to virtue or to vice, should remain such arrant fools as to imagine that your sins will not find you out."

And then the Abbé makes open confession, before the congregation, of his past life.

"'I was a priest of the Romish Church as I am now; it would never have done for a priest to be a social sinner! I therefore took every precaution to hide my fault;—but out of my lie springs a living condemnation; from my carefully concealed hypocrisy comes a blazonry of truth, and from my secret sin comes an open vengeance. . . .'"

The report of a pistol shot sounds through the church as the last words are uttered. A young man has fired at the preacher. It is the son seeking his vengeance at last. Manuel prevents the bullet from reaching Vergniaud, who immediately

as a faithless son of the Church, and meets with the retort, "The attack on the Church I admit. I am not the only preacher in the world who has so attacked it. Christ Himself would attack it if He were to visit this earth again!" The remark is characterised as blasphemy, but, on the Cardinal being appealed to, the good Bonpré states his failure to perceive the alleged blasphemy of "our unhappy and repentant brother."

"'In his address to his congregation to-day he denounced social hypocrisy, and also pointed out certain failings in the Church which may possibly need consideration and reform; but against the Gospel of Christ or against the Founder of our Faith I heard no word that could be judged ill-fitting. As for the conclusion which so very nearly ended in disaster and crime, there is nothing to be said beyond the fact that both the persons concerned are profoundly sorry for their sins. . . . Surely we must believe the words of our Blessed Lord, "There is more joy in Heaven over one sinner that repenteth, than over ninety-and-nine just persons which have no need of repentance."'"

This forgiveness of sin which Christ preached and which Marie Corelli claims that the Romish Church does not practise, is the basis of the differences of Cardinal Bonpré with Moretti, and afterwards with the Pope. Vergniaud, still unrebuked by Cardinal Bonpré, declares to Moretti that there is a movement in the world which all

the powers of Rome are unable to cope with, the movement of an ever-advancing and resistless force called Truth, and that God will shake down Rome rather than that the voice of Truth should be silenced.

The Abbé's declarations, as the Vatican emissary points out, mean his expulsion from the Church. Before the interview closes there comes the declaration by Cyrillon Vergniaud, the son of the Abbé, that he is "Gys Grandit," a powerful writer of essays that are the creed of a "Christian Democratic" party—that advocate of Truth to which the Abbé had referred. The announcement is startling to all three clerics, the more so as the young man proceeds to

Moretti and Gys Grandit, the former holds that the Church of Rome is a system of moral government, and that it is proper to thrust out of salvation heretics who are excommunicate, and that if our Lord's commands were to be obeyed to the letter it would be necessary to find another world to live in. These propositions the Christian Democrat absolutely denies, and urges, on the other hand, that it may be possible that we may be forced to obey Christ's commands *to the letter* or perish for refusing to do so. For permitting such remarks to go unreproved, Moretti, as the interview closes, intimates that, in reporting the matter to the Pope, the attitude of Cardinal Bonpré will be explained. Further offence is given by the appearance of Manuel upon the scene, and by some remarks the lad makes upon the subject under discussion.

Clouds are gathering heavily over the horizon of the saintly Bonpré, who, accompanied by Manuel, proceeds to Rome after this most unpropitious preliminary to an audience at the Vatican. He is further troubled, immediately after his arrival at the palace of his brother-in-law, Prince Sovrani, by being informed of the "miracle" of Rouen—the recovery of Fabien Doucet, of which he now hears for the first time, though all Rome has been talking loudly of it. Bonpré is decidedly in bad repute at the Vatican, and it is determined that he shall be made

to suffer for his defence of Vergniaud. He adds to his offences by denying all knowledge of the Rouen lad's cure.

Manuel and Bonpré visit St. Peter's, which does not please them, and at last they are received by the Pope. Here all Marie Corelli's criticism of the Romish Church is concentrated in the appeal which is made by the child-Christ to His Holiness. He asks him why he stops at the Vatican all alone.

"'You must be very unhappy! . . . To be here all alone, and a whole world outside waiting to be comforted! To have vast wealth lying about you unused, with millions and millions of poor, starving, struggling dying creatures, near at hand, cursing the God whom they have never been taught to know or to bless! . . .

or public ceremonial, but simply clothed in pure holiness! So shall God love you more! So shall you pass unscathed through the thick of battle, and command Brotherhood in place of Murder! Go out and welcome Progress!—take Science by the hand!—encourage Intellect!—for all these things are of God, and are God's gifts divine! Live as Christ lived, teaching the people personally and openly;—loving them, pitying them, sharing their joys and sorrows, blessing their little children! Deny yourself to no man;—and make of this cold temple in which you now dwell self-imprisoned, a home and refuge for the friendless and the poor! Come out with me!

"'Come out with me and minister with your own hands to the aged and the dying!' pursued Manuel, 'and so shall you grow young! Command that the great pictures, the tapestries, the jewels, the world's trash of St. Peter's, be sold to the rich, who can afford to place them in free and open galleries where all the poorest may possess them! But do not You retain them! You do not need them—your treasure must be sympathy for all the world! Not One section of the world,—not One form of creed,—but for all!—if you are truly the Dispenser of Christ's Message to the earth! Come—unprotected, save by the Cross! Come with no weapon of defence—"heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils! Freely ye have received, freely give! Provide neither gold nor silver nor brass in your purse,"—come, and by your patience—your gentleness—your pardon—your love to all men, show that "the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!" Walk fearless in the thick of battles, and your very presence shall engender peace! For the Holy Spirit shall surround and encompass you;

the fiercest warriors shall bend before you, as they never would if you assumed a world's throne or a world's sovereignty! Come, uncrowned, defenceless; —but strong in the Spirit of God! Think of all the evil which has served as the foundation for this palace in which you dwell! Can you not hear in the silence of the night, the shrieks of the tortured and dying of the Inquisition? Do you never think of the dark days, ten and twelve hundred years after Christ, when no virtue seemed left upon the earth?—when the way to this very throne was paved by poison and cold steel?—when those who then reigned here, and occupied Your place, led such infamous lives that the very dogs might have been ashamed to follow in their footsteps!—when they professed to be able to sell the Power of the Holy Ghost for so much gold and silver? Remember the words, "Whoso shall blaspheme

Churches, which are like a forest of dark trees, blocking out the radiance of the Sun! God, who manifests His power and tenderness in the making of the simplest leaf, the smallest bird, is lost to the understanding and affection of humanity in the multitude of Creeds! Come out with me,—simple and pure, gentle and strong! Tell all the lost and the wandering that there never was, and never will be but one God supreme and perfect, whose name is Love, whose work is Love!—and whose Messenger, Christ, pronounced the New Commandment Love, instead of Hate! Come out with me while it is yet day, for the night cometh when no man can work! Come and lift up the world by your very coming! Stretch out your hands in benediction over kings and beggars alike!—there are other roses to give than Golden ones to Queens! There are poor women who share half they earn with those still poorer—there are obscure lives which in their very obscurity are forming the angel-nature, and weaving the angel's crown,—look for these in the world—give *them* your Golden Roses! Leave rulers and governments alone, for you should be above and beyond all rulers and governments! You should be the Herald of peace, the Pardoner of sin, the Rescuer of the fallen, and the Refuge of the distressed! Come out with me, and be all this to the world, so that when the Master comes He may truly find you working in His vineyard!

"'Come out with me . . . or if you will not come, —then beware! . . . beware of the evil days which are at hand! The people are wandering to and fro, crossing all lands, struggling one against the other, hoarding up useless gold, and fighting for supremacy!— but "the day of the Lord shall come like a thief in the

night, and blessed is he who shall be found watching!" Watch! The hour is growing dark and full of menace! —the nations are as frightened children, losing faith, losing hope, losing strength! Put away,—put away from you the toys of time!—quench in your soul the thirst for gold, for of this shall come nothing but corruption! Why trifle with the Spirit of holy things? Why let your servants use the Name of the Most High to cover hypocrisy? Why crave for the power of temporal things, which passes away in the dust of destroyed kingdoms? For the Power of the Spirit is greater than all! And so it shall be proved! The Spirit shall work in ways where it has never been found before!—it shall depart from the Churches which are unworthy of its Divine inspiration!—it shall invest the paths of science!—it shall open the doors of the locked stars! It shall display the worlds invisible;—the

afterwards it is deemed expedient for them to leave Rome for shelter in England, the idea being intimated that the authorities of the Church were determined to make a prisoner of the Cardinal, and inflict upon him some undefined evil.

So far as the book is concerned apart from its central theme, the interest is held by the light touches of the loves of some charming people, and also of a very frivolous *roué*, the Marquis Fontenelle. This very "up-to-date" French nobleman is ultimately, to the relief of every one and the regret of few, killed in a duel with his own brother, the great actor Miraudin. To make this melodramatic incident as striking as possible the author kills both the brothers. The Marquis is a character who says and does what would seem to be impossible things. Notwithstanding his immoral propensities, he has a certain pleasing fascination that almost inclines one to regard his faults with tolerance. His faults are many, but let it be said to his credit at least that he recognises them. His views of men and women and love are extraordinarily callous and cynical, yet it is an absolute fact that the prototype of the Marquis Fontenelle exists, and holds and openly expresses the views to which in this book he is made to give utterance. And, evil as he is, he also is conquered at the last by the true character of a

sweet, pure, womanly woman. It is such who conquer all evil.

The Comtesse Sylvie Hermenstein, an altogether delightful lady, marries Aubrey Leigh and leaves the Church of Rome. The story of her doing so, of the struggles of the Romish priesthood to retain her and her wealth, and of the methods by which they endeavoured to attain that end, is in itself a stirring narrative.

Marie Corelli is altogether pleasing, not only to those who approve the mission of her book, but to many of her most severe critics, in her account of the life which Leigh in younger days had led in a Cornish fishing village, working as one of them-

believing himself great and holding the view—once generally held, but now to a large extent exploded—that woman's work cannot be equal to masculine effort. Angela has for years been engaged upon a picture which she hopes will be a masterpiece. No person—not even father or lover—has been permitted to gaze upon the canvas. A date for the uncovering and inspection of the picture is fixed. Alone in her studio the evening before, Florian begs admittance in order that he may inspect the picture that night, owing to a journey which he must take early on the morrow. Angela consents. "Come and see." The concealing curtain is removed and Florian recoils with an involuntary cry, and then remains motionless and silent, stricken dumb and stupid by the magnificent creation which confronts him.

"The central glory of the whole picture was a figure of Christ . . . kingly and commanding." Near by are seen the faces of many pre-eminent in the history of the time. The Pope is shown fastening fetters of iron round a beautiful youth called Science. The leader of the Jesuits is counting gold. The forms of men representing every description of Church doctrine are beheld trampling underneath them other human creatures.

"And over all this blackness and chaos the supernal figure of the glorious Christ was aërially poised,—one

Hand was extended, and to this a Woman clung—a woman with a beautiful face made piteous in its beauty by long grief and patient endurance. In her other arm she held a sleeping child—and mother and child were linked together by a garland of flowers partially broken and faded. Her entreating attitude,—the sleeping child's helplessness—her worn face,—the perishing roses of earth's hope and joy,—all expressed their meaning simply yet tragically; and as the Divine Hand supported and drew her up out of the universal chaos below, the hope of a new world, a better world, a wiser world, a holier world, seemed to be distantly conveyed. But the eyes of the Christ were full of reproach, and were bent on the Representative of St. Peter binding the laurel-crowned youth, and dragging him into darkness,—and the words written across the golden mount of the picture in clear black

Angela, happily, is not killed. Varillo, who escapes, enters into a conspiracy to declare and maintain that the great picture is his. He is got out of the world and out of the book by perishing in a fire at a monastery to which he had been taken. Such treachery it is almost impossible to conceive. Yet those who condemn the incident should remember some of Marie Corelli's own personal experiences, with which the world has now to some extent become acquainted. Angela subsequently marries Gys Grandit.

Throughout the book there are a good many discourses by Aubrey Leigh and Gys Grandit on the subject of Christian Democracy. What seems to be the main desire of this party is "a purified Church—a House of Praise to God, without any superstition or Dogma." We must confess, however, that we recognise the truth of the remark made by Gherardi—one of the Roman prelates—"You must have Dogma. You must formulate something out of a chaos of opinion"; and neither through Manuel, Aubrey Leigh, nor Gys Grandit does Marie Corelli tell us how she would build up this simple universal Church of which she speaks so much. We may, however, expect in a further book to have Miss Corelli's constructive conceptions on the subject. The basis of it all is, at any rate, that the main feature of all worship should be praise

of the Almighty and His Divine Son; and, as a true believer and an artist, she would have the churches not only essentially houses of Praise, but buildings worthy of the high purpose for which they are erected. In "The Master Christian" she gives us her step-father's poem as indicating Aubrey Leigh's ideal on the subject:

"If thou'rt a Christian in deed and thought,
Loving thy neighbour as Jesus taught,—
Living all days in the sight of Heaven,
And not *one* only out of seven,—
Sharing thy wealth with the suffering poor,
Helping all sorrow that Hope can cure,—
Making religion a truth in the heart,
And not a cloak to be wore in the mart,

If Conscience the warder that keeps thee whole
Had uttered no voice to thy slumbering soul,—
All God's angels will say, 'Well done!'
Whenever thy mortal race is run.
White and forgiven,
Thou'lt enter Heaven,
And pass, unchallenged, the Golden Gate,
Where welcoming spirits watch and wait
To hail thy coming with sweet accord
To the Holy City of God the Lord!

"If thou art humble and wilt not scorn,
However wretched, a brother forlorn,—
If thy purse is open to misery's call,
And the God thou lovest is God of all,
Whatever their colour, clime or creed,
Blood of thy blood, in their sorest need,—
If every cause that is good and true,
And needs assistance to dare and do,
Thou helpest on through good and ill,
With trust in Heaven, and God's good will,—
All God's angels will say, 'Well done!'
Whenever thy mortal race is run.
White and forgiven,
Thou'lt enter Heaven,
And pass, unchallenged, the Golden Gate,
Where welcoming spirits watch and wait
To hail thy coming with sweet accord
To the Holy City of God the Lord!"

In the closing of the story we find Cardinal Bonpré threatened by the Pope with severe punishment unless he parts with Manuel, and the Cardinal's dignified and argumentative reply. The two part, but it is not at the bidding of the Pope. There is a beautiful description of the last night

on earth of the Cardinal and of a vision beheld by him—a Dream of Angels, "Of thousands of dazzling faces, that shone like stars or were fair as flowers!"

So the Cardinal passes away to his eternal rest:

"And when the morning sun shone through the windows . . . its wintry beams encircled the peaceful form of the dead Cardinal with a pale halo of gold,—and when they came and found him there, and turned his face to the light—it was as the face of a glorified saint, whom God had greatly loved!

* * * * *

"And of the 'Cardinal's foundling'—what of him? Many wondered and sought to trace him, but no one ever heard where he had gone. . . . Some say he has never disappeared—but that in some form or

CHAPTER XIV

"TEMPORAL POWER"

THIS, Marie Corelli's latest work, appeared on August 28th, 1902, the first edition totalling up to the unprecedented number of 120,000 copies. We understand that, since the primary issue, a further 30,000 copies have been printed. Thus it comes about that in spite of all the newspaper invective of which she has been the victim and the verbal floodgates that have been opened upon her, Marie Corelli has with her latest production broken the book-selling record for a six-shilling volume on its first appearance.

"Temporal Power" is not an inviting name. As a school-miss would say, "It sounds dry." It has not the mystery-suggesting flavour of "The House on the Marsh" or the thrilling and adventuresome qualities of a title like "Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Sea"; yet "Temporal Power," despite its appellation, is, at the time of writing, the most-talked-about book in the world.

"For," to quote Marie Corelli, "it must be borne

in mind that 'Temporal Power' are the two dazzling words which for ever fascinate the Pope, and are the keynotes of every attempt at supremacy. 'Temporal Power' is the desire of kings, as of commoners. There is nothing really prosaic about such a title, unless the thing itself be deemed prosaic, which, if this were proved, would make out that all the work of the world was useless and that nothing whatever need be done except fold one's hands and sit down in unambitious contentment."

"Temporal Power" was not issued to the Press for review, but no less than three hundred and fifty journals—big and little—paid Miss Corelli the compliment of purchasing the book in order to comment

arisen with respect to our subject, and write as he thinks, combining, as it appears to us, a happy knack of lucid expression with a calm and temperate judgment.

"A text from St. Paul as follows, 'For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places,' prefaces and in a measure explains this very remarkable book. The hero of the story is a King reigning in these latter days over a Christian country that never once throughout the book receives a name. This omission, however, is not likely to be very early noticed by the reader, so intense is the interest aroused by the narrative, so rapid and sustained is its action. The King, married to a beautiful but cold consort who has borne him three sons, suddenly awakes to the fact that he is not doing his duty to his people, and resolves to go amongst them to see things for himself. He accordingly does so in disguise, and actually joins a society of Socialists. Hearing what is said about his Ministers he tests them and vetoes a declaration of war which is being brought about in the interests of certain capitalists and through the agency of a corrupt Press. Another conspiracy he contends with and defeats is a Jesuit one, during which an attempt is made upon his life, an attempt foiled by a beautiful woman of the people, who receives the knife-thrust in his place. One of the main themes of the book is the love of the King's eldest son Humphry for Gloria, a poor but beautiful girl. He has secretly wedded her, and the fact coming to the King's knowledge he upbraids his son and tells him that, the

marriage with Gloria being of necessity morganatic, he must make a speedy alliance with a Princess of a neighbouring state. Then ensues a fine scene in which the young Prince firmly refuses to abandon Gloria, or to commit bigamy by another marriage. It is one of those scenes in which Miss Corelli is seen at her best. There is deep scorn in the Prince's utterance when he declines the other marriage: 'Three or four Royal sinners of this class I know of who for all their pains have not succeeded in winning the attachment of their people, either for themselves or their heirs.' He further emphatically assures his Royal father that he will, if needful, 'make it a test case, and appeal to the law of the realm. If that law tolerates a crime in princes which it would punish in commoners, then I shall ask the People to judge me!' The whole book throughout is so arranged that Miss Corelli is every-

To begin with, it needs to be explained that Mr. Stead first of all wrote a private letter to Miss Corelli telling her that it was "by far the strongest book she had yet written." He then went on to suggest that she meant her characters for certain living Royalties and celebrities. Miss Corelli wrote back to him at once, stating that he was entirely in error. He having made the suggestion that she had described Queen Alexandra as the cold and irresponsive Queen of "Temporal Power," Miss Corelli referred him to her "Christmas Greeting," published at the end of the previous year, for the description of the Queen as seen in "The Soul of Queen Alexandra." The general tone of Mr. Stead's review was to accuse Miss Corelli of "disloyalty" (though he himself, Miss Corelli complains, had long expressed views that were distinctly pro-Boer), and to inquire sarcastically how it happened that she was invited to the Coronation? It may be stated that she was invited to the Coronation because the King knows her personally, and, knowing her, is perfectly aware that he has no more loyal subject—a conviction that is not likely to be disturbed by the casual statement even of an experienced reviewer like Mr. Stead. From certain letters and messages Miss Marie Corelli has received from both the King and Queen (if she cared to make them public), it is very evident

that she is thoroughly appreciated by the Royal Family, and that they are the last people in the world to believe the numerous adverse statements circulated about her merely on account of her brilliant success.

It was in the September (1902) *Review of Reviews* that Mr. Stead devoted four pages to his criticism of "Temporal Power," which was described as "a tract for the guidance of the King."

"The fact" (continued Mr. Stead) "that her pages reflect as in a glass darkly, in an exaggerated and somewhat distorted shape, the leading personages in the English Court, and in contemporary politics, *may* be one of those extraordinary coincidences

as his Prime Minister an aged marquis, who is a dark, heavy man of intellectual aspect, whose manner is profoundly discouraging to all who seek to win his sympathy, and whose ascendency in his own Cabinet is overshadowed by that of a Secretary of State, who bears an extraordinary resemblance to a certain Secretary of State who shall be nameless. This 'honourable statesman' is hand-in-glove with an alien journalist, who is described here and there in terms which fit more or less loosely to one or two proprietors of journals of very large circulations in London town. With the aid of this supreme embodiment of the mercenary journalism of our latter day, the Secretary of State conceives the idea of working up a war for the annexation of a small State, whose conquest was certain to increase the value of various shares in which the Secretary and his friends had largely speculated, and further, to extricate them from various political difficulties in which they had found themselves involved."

We have Miss Corelli's authority for stating, with all possible emphasis, that "Temporal Power" was written without the least intention on the part of the author to introduce living personalities under a romantic disguise. As touching the character of the defaulting Secretary of State, Carl Perousse, with which a large number of writers (including Mr. Stead) have sought to identify Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, it may be pointed out that if the author had any prominent European statesman at all in view, it was a well-known Italian minister, now deceased, as any one with judgment and knowledge

of Italian affairs could testify—though Perousse is made tall and thin in the book, with the express object that he shall escape association with the said Italian minister, who was short and fat. Nothing has astonished the novelist more than the numerous letters she has received from members of Mr. Chamberlain's party in which it is stated that the villainous Perousse is "exactly like" their leader. We have only to refer such correspondents to Miss Corelli's public speeches in Edinburgh and Glasgow to prove that she has always spoken in high praise of the Colonial Secretary.

The King of the book is no more intended

strenuously opposed to the political and educational system of Jesuitry, and believes that the whole civilised world is with her.

The much-discussed question of "Royal bigamy" as condemned by the action of Miss Corelli's young Prince Humphry and his love for Gloria, is a matter that has nothing to do with one Royal Family more than another. Our author's ideas are, that if any crime is a crime in commoners, it should not be excused in persons of Royal birth; moreover, she thinks that many a Royal Prince has been made hopelessly miserable, and the springs of his life poisoned at their very fount, by his being forced to wed where he does not love, merely for "reasons of State." The Pope has quite recently condemned Royal alliances between cousins; and as all Royal Families are at the present day very closely allied, Miss Corelli thinks it will soon be necessary for heirs to thrones to enjoy the same honest freedom of purpose in their loves and marriages as the simplest gentlemen in the land.

The novelist has been told that she has made enemies among the "extra-loyal" and "Imperialistic" party. She presumes the "extra-loyal" means the "extra-toadies." If the "Imperialistic" party is a party which seeks to curtail and restrict the rights of the People, then she goes with the

People against all political parties whatsoever. But she takes no side in party politics : she is a stickler for Justice and Right for the great majority.

Two apparent attempts in journals catering specially for the book trade, were made to quash the success of the novel. One of these journals plainly stated that "Temporal Power" had not obtained the triumph claimed for it. The publishers, Messrs. Methuen & Co., instantly taxed the paper in question with having misstated the case, with the result that the following retractation was published : "With reference to our statement last month, regarding the sales of 'Temporal Power,' we learn that, so far from the repeat

The other periodical, after making one or two attempts to stem the great wave of "Temporal Power," printed the following somewhat half-hearted comment: "Although few reviewers have spoken kindly of this novel, its sale has reached a figure which it is unnecessary to repeat here; whether its merits deserve such popularity we must refrain from discussing."

In some quarters it has been boldly alleged that "Temporal Power" is like "The Eternal City." There are absolutely no points of resemblance. Miss Corelli has never read "The Eternal City" or any of Mr. Hall Caine's books except "The Christian." She declares, however, that she searched in vain for a real follower of Christ in that work. It is interesting to note, by the way, that although the two novelists met years ago at a social function, they are practically strangers to one another, and are probably content to remain so.

From a book containing scores of powerful passages which would well bear reproduction independently of the context, we only propose to make a single quotation. The following extract concerns one of the most touching events of the story, *i.e.*, the rejection of the King's offered love by Lotys, woman of the people:

"'Lotys!' he said; 'are you so cold, so frozen in an ice-wall of conventionality that you cannot warm

to passion—not even to that passion which every pulse of you is ready to return? What do you want of me? Lover's oaths? Vows of constancy? Oh, beloved woman as you are, do you not understand that you have entered into my very heart of hearts—that you hold my whole life in your possession? You —not I—are the ruling power of this country! What you say, that I will do! What you command, that will I obey! While you live, I will live—when you die, I will die! Through you I have learned the value of sovereignty,—the good that can be done to a country by honest work in kingship,—through you I have won back my disaffected subjects to loyalty;—it is all you—only you! And if you blamed me once as a worthless king, you shall never have cause to so blame me again! But you must help me,—you must help me with your love!'

"'Lotys!' he said, and stretched out his hands towards her; 'Lotys, I love you!'

"A change passed over her,—rapid and transfiguring as a sudden radiance from Heaven. With an impulsive gesture, beautiful in its wild abandonment, she cast herself at his feet.

"'And I love you!' she said. 'I love you with every breath of my body, every pulse of my heart! I love you with the entire passion of my life! I love you with all the love pent up in my poor starved soul since childhood until now!—I love you more than woman ever loved either lover or husband! I love you, my lord and King!—but even as I love you, I honour you! No selfish thought of mine shall ever tarnish the smallest jewel in your Crown! Oh, my beloved! My Royal soul of courage! What do you take me for? Should I be worthy of your thought if I dragged you down? Should I be Lotys,—if, like some light woman who can be bought for a few jewels,—I gave myself to you in that fever of desire which men mistake for love? Ah, no!—ten thousand times no! I love you! Look at me,—can you not see how my soul cries out for you? How my lips hunger for your kisses—how I long, ah, God! for all the tenderness which I know is in your heart for me,—I, so lonely, weary, and robbed of all the dearest joys of life!—but I will not shame you by my love, my best and dearest! I will not set you one degree lower in the thoughts of the People, who now idolise you and know you as the brave, true man you are! My love for you would be poor indeed, if I could not sacrifice myself altogether for your sake,—you, who are my King!'

"He heard her,—his whole soul was shaken by the passion of her words.

"'Lotys!' he said,—and again—'Lotys!'

"He drew her up from her kneeling attitude, and gathering her close in his arms, kissed her tenderly, reverently—as a man might kiss the lips of the dead.

"'Must it be so, Lotys?' he whispered; 'must we dwell always apart?'

"Her eyes, beautiful with a passion of the highest and holiest love, looked full into his.

"'Always apart, yet always together, my beloved!' she answered; 'together in thought, in soul, in aspiration!—in the hope and confidence that God sees us, and knows that we seek to live purely in His sight! Oh, my King, you would not have it otherwise! You would not have our love defiled! How common and easy it would be for me to give myself to you!—as other women are only too ready to give themselves,—

heart—I kiss your lips—I say with all my soul in the prayer—God bless you!—God keep you!—God save you, my King! Though I shall live apart from you all my days, my spirit is one with yours! God will know that truth when we meet—on the other side of Death!'

"Her tears fell fast, and he bent over her, torn by a tempest of conflicting emotions, and kissing the soft hair that lay loosely ruffled against his breast.

"'Then it shall be so, Lotys!' he murmured at last. 'Your wish is my law!—it shall be as you command! I will fulfil such duties as I must in this world,—and the knowledge of your love for me,—your trust in me, shall keep me high in the People's honour! Old follies shall be swept away—old sins atoned for;—and when we meet, as you say, on the other side of Death, God will perchance give us all that we have longed for in this world—all that we have lost!'

"His voice shook,—he could not further rely on his self-control.

"'I will not tempt you, Lotys!' he whispered—'I dare not tempt myself! God bless you!'

"He put her gently from him, and stood for a moment irresolute. All the hope he had indulged in of a sweeter joy than any he had ever known, was lost,—and yet—he knew he had no right to press upon her a love which, to her, could only mean dishonour.

"'Good-bye, Lotys!' he said huskily; 'my one love in this world and the next! Good-bye!'

"She gazed at him with her whole soul in her eyes,—then suddenly, and with the tenderest grace in the world, dropped on her knees and kissed his hand.

"'God save your Majesty!' she said, with a poor little effort at smiling through her tears; 'for many

and many a long and happy year, when Lotys is no more!'"

This beautiful passage alone is a literary *tour-de-force*. "Temporal Power," in short, shows no abatement of Marie Corelli's energetic and varied genius, and the public will await her next work with all possible interest.

CHAPTER XV

SPEECHES AND LECTURES

MISS MARIE CORELLI'S career as a public speaker has been a short one, but, so far as it has gone, full of promise. She has a good enunciation and a sweet, penetrating voice; she takes the platform with the whole of her address clearly mapped out in her mind, her only aids to memory being a few notes scribbled on slips of paper, which at first glance look like a number of broad spills. Consulting these occasionally by way of mental refreshment, she says what she has to say with easy self-possession, never hesitating for lack of a suitable word or phrase.

The novelist's first speech in public was made in connection with a bazaar at Henley-in-Arden, Warwickshire, in July, 1899. The announcement that Miss Corelli was to open the proceedings attracted a large number of people to this picturesque little town, which is situated some eight miles from Stratford-on-Avon, on the high road to Birmingham.

When Miss Corelli had mounted the improvised platform, she first thanked the organisers of the bazaar for the compliment that had been paid her in their invitation, and then proceeded as follows :—

"I think we all know very well what a bazaar is. It is peculiar and distinctive; it is a way of charming the money out of our pockets. We wish it to be charmed to-day, because we always know when such money is obtained it is for a good purpose. Sometimes it is for a hospital, frequently it is for the restoration of a parish church. That is our object this afternoon. Now, there are some people who say that a parish church does not always require repair, but in this special case you cannot possibly offer that as an excuse for not spending your money. The parish church of Henley-in-Arden is in a very sad state; indeed, there are holes in the wooden floor through

can only recommend you to buy everything in the place. In the words of the Immortal Bard, whose very spirit permeates the whole of your beautiful county,

'Leave not a wrack behind!'

Set your hearts to the task, your wills to the deed, spend your money, and make the whole thing a great and triumphant success. Ladies and gentlemen, may your purses to-day be like this bazaar, which I have now the honour to declare open!"

An excellent example of what an address to working-men should be, was delivered by Miss Corelli at Stratford-on-Avon on January 6th, 1901. The lecture was entitled "The Secret of Happiness." After some preliminary observations on the birth of the New Century, Miss Corelli said:

"The twentieth century finds us all on the same old search, asking the same old question: How to be happy? Some of the distinguished persons who have written in the newspapers on this subject declare we have lost the art of being happy in the old simple ways, and that all the brightness and mirth which used to make our England 'Merry England' have gone for ever. I think there is some little truth in these statements, and the reason is not very far distant. We think too much of ourselves and too little of our neighbours. There is nothing so depressing as a constant contemplation of one's self, and the greatest moral cowardice in the world's opinion comes from consulting one's own personal convenience. It is just

as if a man were asked to look at a beautiful garden full of flowers, and, instead of accepting the invitation, sat down with the Röntgen rays to look at his own bones. His bones concern no one but himself, and are a dull entertainment at best. To be truly happy we must set ourselves on one side, and think of all the good we can do, all the love we can show to our neighbours. This is our work and our business, and, by performing that work thoroughly well, we shall not lose the secret of happiness; we shall find it. The harming, the slandering, the over-reaching, the plucking down of our neighbours is not our business, and if we indulge in that kind of thing we shall never be happy. It is to a great extent true, as some of the newspapers tell us, that the twentieth century still finds us very far from the best ideals and hopes. War still hangs like a cloud across the country.

since I reached my sixteenth year—that work is happiness. No one can take my work from me and therefore no one can take my happiness from me. I defy any one to upset, worry, or put me out in the least so long as I have my work to do. Take away my work, and I am lost. Show me a lazy, loafing person, man or woman, and I will show you a discontented grumbler, who is a misery in his or her home, and a misery to him or her self. Nothing is idle in God's universe; the smallest observation will prove that. If there were early closing up there (*pointing upwards*) there would soon be an end to us all. The flower works, as it pushes its way through the soil to bud and blossom; the tree works as it breaks into beautiful foliage; the whole earth works incessantly to produce its fruits. The sun works; it never rests; it rises and sets with perfect regularity. In fact, everything we see about us in Nature is in constant, steady, splendid, perfect work. The idle person is, therefore, out of tune with the plan of God's creation and action. A great millionaire whom I know said to his son: 'If you can't find anything to do I will disinherit you, so that you may work as hard as I did. That will make a man of you.' In this beautiful world, with a thousand opportunities of doing good every day and all day, and with the light of the Christian faith spread about us like perpetual sunshine, no one should be really unhappy. To your society, which has done so much good already, which is doing so much good, and will continue to do so much good, I would say, if I may be permitted to offer any advice: Cultivate among yourselves a spirit of cheerfulness, light-heartedness, and content, which shall spread the influence of moral and mental sunshine

all through this dear little town in which you dwell. Let those who don't belong to your society see that you can be merry and wise without needing any other stimulant than your own cheery natures, and that the Christian faith is to you a healthy and active working daily principle, the heart, life, and soul. Show all your friends—and enemies too—that you have the secret of happiness by holding up a firm faith in the goodness of God; by keeping the welfare of others always in sight, and loving your neighbour not only as yourself, but even more than yourself; and by carrying out whatever you have to do, no matter how trivial it be, so thoroughly and so perfectly that you can feel proud of it. Such pride is true pride, and thoroughly justifiable, and the independence that comes from work thoroughly well done is a noble independence. I would not change such

is greed of gold. Our upper classes are all craving for yet still more money, and as much money is spent in a single night on a dinner in London as would keep nearly all Stratford. We are told that England will lose her prestige through the money-craving mania of her people More than one great empire has fallen from an excessive love of luxury and self-indulgence, but we will hope that no such mischief will come to our beloved England. At any rate, in this little corner of it—Shakespeare's greenwood—where the greatest of thinkers, philosophers, and poets was born, and to which he was content to return, when he had made sufficient means, and die among his own people—here, I say, let us try and keep up high ideals of mutual help, love, and labour. Let us keep them up to their highest spirit. The secret of happiness is to hold fast to such simple, old-fashioned virtues as love of home, a life of simplicity, and appreciation of all the beautiful things of Nature, which are so richly strewn about us in Warwickshire, and never to lose sight of the best of all things—the great lesson of the pure Christian faith, the lesson which teaches us how the Divine sacrifice of self for the sake of others was sufficient to redeem the world! A happy New Year and a century of hope and good to all of you."

In November, 1901, Miss Corelli delivered her first lecture in Scotland. It was called "The Vanishing Gift: an Address on the Decay of the Imagination," and was listened to with the greatest appreciation by a crowded audience of the members of the Edinburgh Philosophical Institution

and their friends, numbering some four thousand persons.

Scotland has ever been a more literary country than England. A novel that fails in England often sells well in Scotland. Scotch people are very loyal to the magazines they like, and they always display a keen interest in literary ventures. Thackeray was a great favourite up there. "I have had three per cent. of the whole population here," he wrote from Edinburgh in November, 1856. "If I could but get three per cent. of London!" Both Dickens and Thackeray received tangible tokens of regard from Edinburgh people, Thackeray's taking the form of a silver statuette of "Mr. Punch," designed as an

Dickens. Since then, no one, save Miss Corelli, had received the unanimous vote of the Committee as meriting such a tribute. The rose-bowl bears the following inscription :—

> "*Presented to Miss Marie Corelli by the Edinburgh Philosophical Institution, in grateful recognition of the Brilliant Address delivered by her on November 19th*, 1901."

It is worthy of note that the leading journal of Edinburgh, *The Scotsman*, made no allusion whatever to this presentation. The omission caused considerable annoyance to the Committee of the Philosophical Institution, and the Secretary made inquiry as to why their special compliment to Miss Marie Corelli had been passed over. The reply was that they "did not think it was necessary to mention it" ; a particularly lame and inadequate answer, seeing that if such a handsome presentation on the part of a great Institution had been made to any well-known male author, the probabilities are that considerable importance would have been attached to the incident. As it was, *The Scotsman* was judged to have committed itself to a singular error of prejudice in the omission, as also by stating that Miss Corelli's crowded audience at the Queen's Hall were "mostly women," a perfectly erroneous statement, as by far the larger half of the assembly was composed of the sterner sex.

Miss Corelli, in the course of the lecture referred to, attributed the gradual dwindling of Imagination to the feverish unrest and agitation of the age in which we live. The hurry-skurry of modern life, the morbid craving for incessant excitement, breed a disinclination to think. Where there is no time to think, there is less time to imagine; and where there is neither thought nor imagination, creative work of a high and lasting quality is not possible. In the world's earlier days conceptions of art were of the loftiest and purest order.

"The thoughts of the 'old world' period are written in well-nigh indelible characters. The colossal architecture of the temples of ancient Egypt, and that marvellous im-

perchance, we shall leave to future generations little more than an echo of 'much ado about nothing.' For truly we live at present under a veritable scourge of mere noise. No king, no statesman, no general, no thinker, no writer is allowed to follow the course of his duty or work without the shrieking comment of all sorts and conditions of uninstructed and misguided persons. . . ."

Imagination is an artist's first necessary. The poet, the painter, the sculptor, or the musician must be able to make a world of his own, and live in it, before he can make one for others. When he has evolved such a world out of his individual consciousness, and has peopled it with the creations of his fancy, he can turn its "airy substance" into reality for all time.

"Shakespeare's world is real; so real that there are not wanting certain literary impostors who grudge him its reality, and strive to dispossess him of his own. Walter Scott's world is real; so real that you have built him a shrine here in Edinburgh, crowded with sculptured figures of men and women, most of whom never existed save in his teeming fancy. What a tribute to the power of Imagination is that beautiful monument in the centre of Princes Street, with all the forms evoked from one great mind, lifted high above us, who consider ourselves 'real' people!"

The lecturer proceeded to deplore acts of vandalism such as that which caused "the pitiful ruin of Loch Katrine' in supplying Glasgow with water. Further on she lamented the gradual dis-

appearance of "that idealistic and romantic spirit" which has helped to make Scotland's history such a brilliant chronicle of heroism and honour.

In her powerful peroration the novelist graphically told of modern wonders which were imagined when the world was young.

"What, after all, is Imagination? It is a great many things. It is a sense of beauty and harmony; it is an instinct of poetry and prophecy. A Persian poet describes it as an immortal sense of memory which is always striving to recall the beautiful things the soul has lost. Another fancy, also from the East, is that it is 'an instructive premonition of beautiful things to come.' Another, which is perhaps the most accurate description of all, is that it is 'the sundial of the soul,

his intelligence smartly enough. Every fairy-tale has a meaning; every legend a lesson. The submarine boat in perfection has been 'imagined' by Jules Verne. Wireless telegraphy appears to have been known in the very remote days of Egypt, for in a very old book called 'The History of the Pyramids,' translated from the Arabic, and published in France in 1672, we find an account of a certain high priest of Memphis, named Saurid, who, so says the ancient Arabian chronicler, 'prepared for himself a casket, wherein he put magic fire, and, shutting himself up with the casket, he sent messages with the fire day and night, over land and sea, to all those priests over whom he had command, so that all the people should be made subject to his will. And he received answers to his messages without stop or stay, and none could hold or see the running fire, so that all the land was in fear by reason of the knowledge of Saurid.' In the same volume we find that a priestess, named Borsa, evidently used the telephone; for, according to her history, 'she applied her mouth and ears unto pipes in the wall of her dwelling, and so heard and answered the requests of the people in the distant city.'

"Thus it would seem that there is nothing new under the sun to that 'dainty Ariel' of the mind—Imagination."

Early in 1902 Miss Corelli again gave an address in Scotland—this time at Glasgow, where one of the largest audiences ever known in that city assembled to hear her lecture on "Signs of the Times." Every seat was occupied, and up to the last moment numbers were clamouring for only standing room. All reserved seats had been booked

for nearly three weeks beforehand, and the extraordinary number of applications received proved that double the accommodation available could have been taken up.

The address was undeniably daring and spirited, touching on various social aspects of the hour. The apathy of Parliament on certain pressing matters of home interest, the new rules of Procedure in the House, the inrush of undesirable aliens, the traitorous attitude of the pro-Boers, the crowding out of British industries by an excess of foreign competition, the German slanders upon our army, the change in the British uniform to the German model, and the flattering attentions of Germany towards

called a 'statesmanlike utterance' in many quarters of our own always courteous Press, but by our Continental neighbours it has been simply taken as a Royal and official statement of British incompetency. It has even been said that no Prince of Wales should ever have admitted any possible likelihood of weakness in his own country. We must remember, however, that the warning of His Royal Highness was directed against foreign competition, and may have been intended to prepare British trade for the impending commercial designs of Germany upon South Africa. . . . If the British Lion is indeed sleeping, it is time to wake, but to some of us the Great Creature seems never to have slept, but to have been caught unsuspectingly in a trap of restrictive legislation and vested interests, and so bound hand and foot unawares. The Lion is a generous animal, but in certain old fables he is represented as being no match for the Fox. If, as the Prince of Wales says, the old country is to maintain her position of pre-eminence against foreign competition, she has some right to demand that she be not swamped and throttled by it under the very shelter of her own sea-wall."

Referring to what she satirically termed the evidence of our "love" for Germany, she pointed out that though Germans were guilty of one of the grossest insults ever recorded in history against our brave army, we, nevertheless, had clothed that army in the German uniform, and had made free and independent Tommy Atkins turn himself into a copy of his Teuton conscript brother. Not only that, we have accepted a German design for the

new postage stamps. She also alluded to the rumour that the Coronation medal was to be struck from a German design.

Miss Corelli concluded with the following words:—

"The greatest, strongest, most splendid and hopeful 'sign of the times' is the advancing and resistless tide of Truth, which is approaching steadily—which cannot be kept back, and which in the first breaking of its great wave shall engulf a whole shore of weedy shams. A desire for Truth is in the hearts of the people: Truth in religion, Truth in Life, Truth in work. We are all aiming for it, pushing towards it, and breaking down obstacles on the way. And, because God is on the side of Truth, we shall obtain it; more speedily, perhaps, than we think—especially if we are not too weakly ready to be led away by the first Anti-Christ of religious,

the qualities that make for greatness. There are people who fear and dislike this lady because the attitude she takes up, on many questions, is significant of Battle. She hits very hard ; her enemies wince beneath her blows, and revile her in wholesale terms because they cannot overcome her in fair combat. But newspaper sneers will do little to affect the judgment of the Public, which is, after all, the critic whose opinion is abiding and final.

CHAPTER XVI

MARIE CORELLI'S VIEWS ON MARRIAGE

MARIE CORELLI seems to think that the present generation is one in which hypocrisy cumbers the face of the globe. "Never," she says, "was the earth so oppressed with the weight of polite lying, never were there such crowds of evil masqueraders, cultured tricksters, and social humbugs, who, though admirable as tricksters and

call "smart" society. The Divorce Court record is certainly a proof that a good many of the weddings that are "arranged" are certainly not made in Heaven. Marie Corelli thinks, indeed, that many women have forgotten what marriage is, and she declares it to be an absolute grim fact that in England many women of the upper classes are not to-day married, but merely bought for a price.

"Marriage is not the Church, the ritual, the blessing of clergymen, or the ratifying and approving presence of one's friends and relations at the ceremony; still less is it a matter of settlements and expensive millinery. It is the taking of a solemn vow before the throne of the Eternal—a vow which declares that the man and woman concerned have discovered in each other his or her true mate; that they feel life is alone valuable and worth living in each other's company; that they are prepared to endure trouble, poverty, pain, sickness, death itself, provided that they may only be together; and that all the world is a mere grain of dust in worth as compared to the exalted passion which fills their souls and moves them to become one in flesh as well as in spirit. Nothing can make marriage an absolutely sacred thing except the great love, combined with the pure and faithful intention of the vow involved."

Amongst all classes a very large number of marriages mean all that. Amongst the poorer classes—not the lowest classes—the proportion is probably the largest, and amongst the middle and higher classes it is so to a large though

diminishing degree. Nevertheless, Marie Corelli states, and we agree, that it is the cash-box that governs the actions of far too many in entering upon the most serious duty of life; and if the man and wife do not realise the importance and sacredness of the tie, the result must be, as the novelist says, that the man and wife will drag down rather than uplift each other.

In a magazine article which Marie Corelli wrote some time ago, she drew a delightful picture of an artist and his wife in Capri who live on £100 a year in perfect bliss. When one views the picture she draws of their life it is easy to think one has found something like the lost paradise. Still, if we all tried love on £100 a year in Capri the housing

being too seldom the result of affection nowadays. They are too often merely the carrying out of a settled scheme of business. Mothers teach their daughters to marry for a "suitable establishment"; fathers, rendered desperate as to what they are to do with their sons in the increasing struggle for life and the incessant demand for luxuries which are not by any means actually necessary to that life, say: "Look out for a woman with money." The heir to a great name and title sells his birthright for a mess of American dollar-potage;—and it is a very common, everyday business to see some Christian virgin sacrificed on the altar of matrimony to a money-lending, money-grubbing son of Israel. Bargain and sale,—sale and bargain,—it is the whole *raison d'être* of the "season,"—the balls, the dinners, the suppers, the parties to Hurlingham and Ascot,—even on the dear old Thames, with its delicious nooks fitted for pure romance and heart betrothal, the clatter of Gunter's luncheon-dishes and the popping of Benoist's champagne-corks remind the hungry gypsies who linger near such scenes of river revelry that there is not much sentiment about,—only plenty of money being wasted. Marie Corelli well says that there can be nothing more hideous—more like a foretaste of hell itself—than the life position of a man and woman who have been hustled into

matrimony, and who, when the wedding fuss is over and the feminine pictorial papers have done gushing about the millinery of the occasion, find themselves alone together, without a single sympathy in common, with nothing but the chink of gold and the rustle of the bank-notes for their heart music, and with a barrier of steadily increasing repulsion and disgust rising between them every day.

We have seen something of such a picture in Marie Corelli's character of Sibyl Elton; that it is no more nor less than a crime to enter upon marriage without that mutual supreme attraction and deep love which makes the union sacred, may be in fact allowed. The question is how to avoid

able millinery. His domain is Nature and the heart of humanity,—and the gifts he can bestow on those who meet him in the true spirit are marvellous and priceless indeed. The exquisite joys he can teach,—the fine sympathies,—the delicate emotions,—the singular method in which he will play upon two lives like separate harps, and bring them into resounding tune and harmony, so that all the world shall seem full of luscious song,—this is one way of Love's system of education. But this is not all—he can so mould the character, temper the will, and strengthen the heart, as to make his elected disciples endure the bitterest sorrows bravely, —perform acts of heroic self-sacrifice and attain the most glorious heights of ambition,—for, as the venerable Thomas à Kempis tells us,—'Love is a great thing, yes, a great and thorough good; by itself it makes everything that is heavy, light—and it bears evenly all that is uneven. For it carries a burden which is no burden, and makes everything that is bitter sweet and tasteful. Though weary it is not tired,—though pressed it is not straightened,—though alarmed it is not confounded, but as a lively flame and burning torch it forces its way upward and securely passes through all. Is not such divine happiness well worth attaining?'"

The answer to that rests with the women mainly, and to them Marie Corelli says:

"I want you to refuse to make your bodies and souls the traffickable material of vulgar huckstering,—I want you to *give* yourselves, ungrudgingly, fearlessly, without a price or any condition whatsoever, to the men you truly love, and abide by the results. If love is love indeed, no regret can be possible. But be sure it *is* love,—the real passion, that elevates you above all sordid and mean considerations of self,—that exalts you to noble thoughts and nobler deeds,—that keeps you faithful to the one vow, and moves you to take a glorious pride in preserving that vow's immaculate purity,—be sure it is all this,—for if it is not all this you are making a mistake and you are ignorant of the very beginnings of love. Try to fathom your own hearts on this vital question—try to feel, to comprehend, to learn the responsibilities invested in womanhood, and never stand before God's altar to accept a blessing on

who form the ideal unions which the novelist so eloquently describes will be sure to train their own offspring on good and intelligent lines. But there are others—so many of them. There is much in the writings of Marie Corelli that bears upon the question, and her text is the dedication of "The Mighty Atom"—"To those self-styled 'Progressivists' who by precept and example assist the infamous cause of education without religion, and who, by promoting the idea, borrowed from French Atheism, of denying to the children in Board schools and elsewhere, the knowledge and love of God, as the true foundation of noble living, are guilty of a worse crime than murder." That is her view. She regards the teaching of simple Christian truths—the love of God, and the instruction which is the basis of all Christian creeds, *i.e.*, to do unto others as you would be done by—as an essential element in the education of children. She would regard it as the most heinous of crimes to take from our English elementary schools that religious instruction which was agreed to in the 1870 Compromise, the Compromise which happily has survived a violent attack made upon it not long since in the elementary educational Parliament of London, the Metropolitan School Board.

Whatever be the general scheme of elementary,

secondary, higher, and technical education and training, Marie Corelli would have the people insist, as for life itself, upon the children being taught "the knowledge and love of God."

She would have that knowledge imparted in the spirit of which Queen Victoria wrote: "I am quite clear," said the Queen, speaking of her eldest daughter, then a child, "that she should be taught to have great reverence for God and for religion, and that she should have the feeling of devotion and love which our Heavenly Father encourages His earthly children to have for Him, and not one of fear and trembling." In "The Master Christian" we see incidentally brought out the evil

the subject demands. There are many Christian parents who for want of thought neglect this matter and sometimes have only themselves to thank for dissolute sons and impure daughters. On the other hand, to their credit it is the fact that many who are not Christians, who are careless and neglectful of religion, or are even agnostics, insist upon their children receiving that religious education which they themselves once received, with the just and broad-minded idea that, though they have become careless, cynical, or entirely agnostic, the children shall start as they did with the same training and have the same opportunity of forming their own judgment on these matters.

Parents will think deeply over "The Mighty Atom" and "Boy." Different as the two stories are, they deal essentially with this great question. They both teach serious lessons to the fathers and the mothers of English boyhood. The stories, as such, have been already dealt with. Here we will just give a few of those lessons which it is the object of the works in question to teach.

The author would have children's bodies educated as well as their minds. She regards the former as the more important for the reason that a healthy body is the most suitable habitation for a healthy mind, and that a keen intellect developed by ruining the physical strength is not calculated

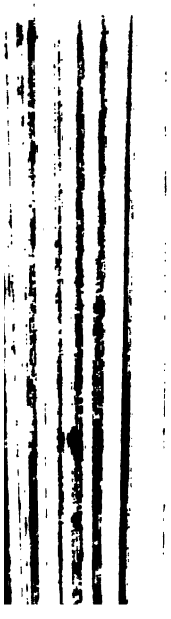
to benefit either the individual, or the community to which the individual belongs. Lionel Valliscourt, the little hero of "The Mighty Atom," has a father and also a tutor, one Montrose. The father is an atheist and anxious to educate the son on a system, part of which is the exclusion of religion from the curriculum. Montrose, a level-headed, clear-brained Scotchman,—no "preacher," but possessing a simple belief in God—is dismissed from his position because he does not approve the father's system. This he describes as child-murder; and in the remarks he addresses to the father at their last interview Marie Corelli's opinions about child-training are indicated:

"'I will have no part in child-murder' (says

was often "tired," or that he felt as if, to use his own words, it wouldn't be a bad thing to belong to the hybernating species and go to sleep all the winter. Miss Corelli detests cram—the regarding of the young human brain as a sort of expanding bag or hold-all, to be filled with various bulky articles of knowledge, useful or otherwise, till it shows signs of bursting. That was the plan of little Lionel's new coach, who, after the operation of cramming a youngster's brain, would then lock up the brain-bag and trust to its carrying the owner through life. If the lock broke and the whole bag gave way, so much the worse for the bag, that was all. That was what happened with poor little Lionel, who hanged himself, tired of the "cram," and worried into insanity by the loss of his mother, the death of his playmate, and the trouble of considering whether, if there be no God, and death is mere negation, it was really worth while living at all.

Healthy physical exercise, reasonable study, and religion as the basis of that study: so Miss Corelli would train the children.

"Boy" teaches equally healthy lessons, though the story and the circumstances are totally different. "Boy" might have been a fine fellow. He had good qualities. That he became a thief and a forger was the fault of the home circumstances and example. The father of "Boy" was a drunkard



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Again, in conclusion
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CHAPTER XVII

SOME PERSONAL ITEMS

IT is pretty generally known that when Sir Theodore Martin desired, in honour of Lady Martin's memory, to place a Helen Faucit memorial in the chancel of Trinity Church, Stratford-on-Avon, it was Miss Marie Corelli who undertook a successful campaign against the project. Sir Theodore Martin most ardently wished to execute his intention, and he had progressed so far with the negotiations that his desires were on the point of being carried out; and they would have been but for the active intervention of Miss Corelli, who roused the whole town of Stratford into energetic protest against the proposed invasion of Shakespeare's own particular shrine. It was Sir Theodore's idea to place a bas-relief of Helen Faucit immediately opposite the historical bust of the Poet, on the other side of the chancel, but in an equally (if not more) prominent position.

Miss Corelli began her campaign with a letter to *The Morning Post* calling public attention to

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at her feet! The whole thing was out of place, and out of tune with the national sentiment, as though Helen Faucit was an eminent actress in her day, she had no connection with Stratford-on-Avon; moreover, she was not British-born. Miss Corelli's fight was a hard one, for though Mr. Sidney Lee, who was entirely on her side, wrote to Sir Theodore Martin himself to expostulate with him on the mistaken idea he had taken up, nothing would have had any effect had not Miss Corelli fortunately discovered the descendants of the family whose mural tablets were about to be displaced without their permission. When she at last won the day, the whole Press broke out unanimously in a chorus of praise and congratulation, which must have been a singular experience for her, so long inured to disparagement. She was bombarded with telegrams from almost every quarter of the globe, particularly from America, expressing the thanks of all lovers of Shakespeare.

It is a pity some one like Marie Corelli was not in Stratford-on-Avon at the time Shakespeare's own house, "New Place," was demolished. Had there been such a one, the chances are that the house would be still standing as one of the world's priceless treasures. Many precious shrines are defaced, and many valuable mementoes lost for lack of some one to speak out who is not afraid

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Donald-Smith's request she perr

journalists went so far as to accuse her of "taking the gate-money" and "speculating in her own portrait." As a matter of fact, Miss Corelli received none of the percentage allowed on the photogravures of the picture, and it may be added that she withdrew the picture altogether from public view before it had been long on exhibition.

Another portrait was painted by Mr. Ellis Roberts for himself. He asked Marie Corelli to sit for him, having always been one of her greatest admirers. He did not, of course, know that she consented to sit for the same primary reason as for the other—namely, that she did not then expect to live more than a few months—and that she wished to bequeath some "presentment" of herself to those who might care for it. Mr. Roberts is probably not aware to this day that she was often almost fainting when she left his studio after a prolonged "sitting." He has never seen her since she recovered her health and good spirits: if he had, it is probable he would wish to make another sketch of her.

We may add that Miss Corelli still declines to allow a portrait of herself to be published—a decision which we regret. For many are the "surprises" that have been given to those expectant of meeting in the novelist a severe literary woman with spectacles and a bilious complexion. It may be truly said that Marie Corelli is very light-hearted, always

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"DEAR MADAM,—

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very clearly through the evident "hole in a millstone," the novelist replied promptly:

"DEAR SIR,—

"I cannot but admire the astute and business-like character of your request; but I do not write 'reviews.' Nothing would ever persuade me to criticise the work of my contemporaries. Moreover, my book, 'The Master Christian,' is not at all on the same theme as 'The Eternal City.' Mr. Hall Caine treats of Rome,—I, of the Christ. The two are direct opposites.

"'The Eternal City' is recognisably inspired by and founded on Zola's 'Rome,' in which great work the 'religious message' of Mr. Caine's novel is fully set forth. The idea of a democratic Rome under a democratic Pope is Zola's 'own original' and belongs to Zola alone. Wherefore, let me suggest that you should ask M. Zola to review the work of his English *confrère*!"

* * * * *

When Sir Henry Drummond Wolff made Miss Corelli's acqaintance he was rather struck by the somewhat lonely and incessantly hard-working life of the young novelist at the time of "Ardath's" publication. Her beloved stepfather was dying by inches—failing gradually every day, and her hours were consumed by anxiety, work and watching.

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Highland gathering at Braemar, at which place Miss Corelli had been staying for some weeks. This gathering, which was honoured by the presence of His Majesty, was attended by Miss Corelli and a party of friends. Miss Corelli, as her thousands of readers have no need to be told, did not require, or seek for, a "mention in the papers" in consequence of her attendance at the function. Had she done so she could easily have paid for it in the "fashionable announcements." She attends many gatherings in connection with which her name is never mentioned, but she does not write complaints—confidential or otherwise—on that score. Some people like to suggest that Marie Corelli (whose circle of distinguished personal friends is remarkably large) is more or less friendless and without social surroundings, a suggestion that, pitiful as it is, is somewhat amusing to those who are favoured with her close acquaintance.

On the occasion in question Miss Corelli wrote a note marked "private and confidential," asking the editor of the ladies' paper not "why her name was not mentioned," but "why it was omitted"—a distinction with a difference in this case—for she happened to be the hostess of a party whose names were included in the newspaper notice, and who were surprised and indignant at the fact that, whilst their names were mentioned, that of their

notable hostess was left out. It was at the suggestion of one of these that Miss Corelli wrote the "private and confidential" letter which the editor, without consulting her, rushed into print. The result of her harmless inquiry is well-known. The publication of the communication brought a shoal of letters to the famous author from men and women of "light and leading," assuring her of their sympathy in this outrage. Amongst the writers of these letters were several very distinguished journalists, a fact which lends emphasis to Miss Corelli's knowledge that, notwithstanding her tilts with the Press, the bulk of the journalists of the country do honour

slips of this correspondence, the hope probably being that he would reproduce them in his journal. He, however, took no notice of these "hand-bills"; and the good citizens of Shakespeare's town generally are far too conscious of Miss Corelli's affection for them and unfailing sympathy in all their interests, to feel anything but unmeasured contempt for any effort to injure her in their esteem. People hastened to call at Mason Croft and express their indignation at the treatment she had received, and they found her, as usual, busily working, happy and unconcerned. To one friend, an M.P., who expressed his views on the subject with considerable expletive, she said quietly, "Oh, well, it really doesn't matter! The editor has condemned himself by his own action. My letter, asking merely why my name was omitted, was quite a harmless epistle, surely? It scarcely merits an imprisonment in the Tower!"

The Daily Express acted somewhat curiously on this occasion. Having copied the whole of the "private correspondence," it was suggested that this paper might possibly be laying itself open to penalties of the law for "breach of copyright." Whereupon haste was made to send the following telegram to Miss Corelli: "Have asked our correspondent to call upon you. We will print with pleasure any statement. Sorry our article did

not please you. Would like to make amends.—*Daily Express.*"

The desire, however, to "make amends" does not appear to have been very hearty, because soon afterwards a second article on the subject appeared in *The Daily Express*, stating that there was "no law to prevent the publication of a private and confidential letter," unless it bore a legal "confidential stamp." And at the same time Mr. Pearson wrote to Miss Corelli to say that he thought the editor who had published her "private and confidential" note was "perfectly justified" in his action! But there can be no possible justification for publishing a letter of confidence. Business would be impossible under such circum-

Photo by] [*Miss B. Vyver.*

MASON CROFT, MISS MARIE CORELLI'S PRESENT RESIDENCE. A CORNER GLIMPSE IN WINTER.

[*To face p.* 304.

offers made to her to lecture in the United States, on almost fabulous terms.

A great chance for "self-advertisement" offered itself to Miss Corelli in the invitation of Edinburgh, last year, to open the Home Industries Exhibition, in Waverley Market. People hoped for her coming, and urgent letters were sent to her assuring her that she would receive a splendid welcome. Miss Corelli, however, declined the tempting proposal, which, if the "advertising" accusations were in any way well-founded, seems a short-sighted waste of opportunity on her part. As a matter of fact, she seldom takes the chances of notoriety that are so frequently offered to her; but it would be easy to name a dozen or more periodicals which are glad to make advertisements for themselves out of some specially contrived attack upon her. The public, however, see through this, and, understanding the motives of action, are all the more loyal to Marie Corelli and her work. Britishers are famed for their love of "fair play," and the spectacle of several able-bodied men engaged in steadily "hounding" a woman who has made her way without their assistance by the fuel of her own brain and energy, does not appeal to the majority. They see no fun in it, but only an exhibition of cowardice.

While on this subject, it may be mentioned that as soon as certain sections of the Press discovered that

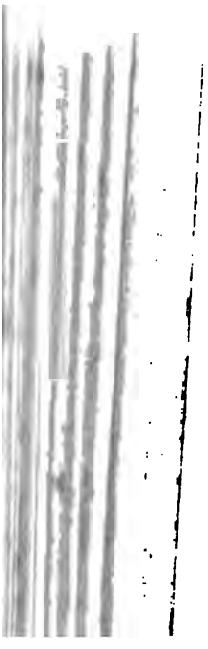
Marie Corelli was among the favoured few who had received an invitation from the King to be present in the Abbey at the Coronation on August 9th, she was bombarded with letters and telegrams from several newspapers entreating her to write for them her "impressions" of the great ceremony. To all these applications she gave no answer. Her silence on such an occasion rather discounts her supposed "love of notoriety"! Truth to tell, her presence at the Abbey, as a guest of the King, created in some quarters quite a riot of fury.

"We hear," said one paper, "that Miss Marie Corelli was among the King's guests in the Abbey! Marvellous! No doubt she wore a gown as gorgeous as her love of self-advertisement could

that it was necessary to "prepare for the worst," and would she therefore write her "impressions" of the King,—which meant, of course, an obituary notice! To which the novelist replied with considerable warmth that she had too much immediate concern for the dangerous condition of her Sovereign, as well as too much honour for him, to "make trade" for the newspapers by writing "obituary notices" of his life before he was dead! By the grace of God, she said, he would be spared to the Throne for many good and happy years to come. Such is the real spirit of the woman whom her more than malicious enemies accuse of "disloyalty" and "desire for advertisement." It is a satisfaction to give a few truths of her real disposition as opposed to the unfounded falsehoods that are circulated about her. As a single example of her womanliness and womanly sympathies, it may be mentioned that no one has yet written a tenderer tribute to the virtues of the Queen than Marie Corelli in "The Soul of Queen Alexandra," published in 1901 in her "Christmas Greeting."

* * * * *

Two letters which were addressed to Miss Corelli by eminent preachers who have since passed away are of interest. In explanation of their inclusion it should be mentioned that Dr. Campbell, the successor of Dr. Parker at the City Temple, was



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Dr. Campbell, di

whom the sermon against the novelist had been sent for perusal. Dr. Parker wrote to Miss Corelli as follows :—

"HAMPSTEAD,
"*October 6th*, 1902.

"DEAR MISS CORELLI,—

"I have just received a letter from my friend Campbell, and though I have to rise from my bed to write this note, I gladly make a very great sacrifice. I do not know the preacher whose sermon you send. I never even heard of him. Campbell I do know—refined, cultured, high-minded. Let me entreat you to serve my true and good friend. What need you care for such an attack? You do not live on the same plane as that nameless man. I read your book[1] with inexpressible delight; why not pay more attention to my praise than to another man's slander? Now do send me a wire or a card or a letter, and say that you will open the bazaar at Brighton.

"Very tired,
"Very dispirited,
"Ever sincerely and hopefully yours,
"JOSEPH PARKER."

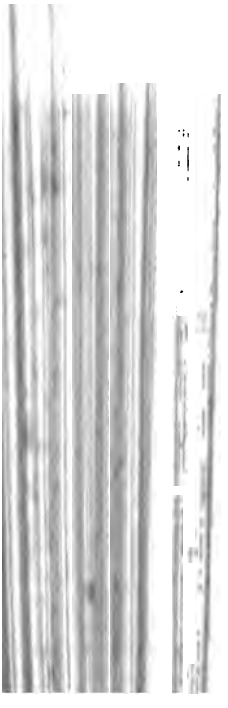
The note from the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes ran thus :—

"MEMORIAL HALL,
"FARRINGDON STREET,
"LONDON, E.C.
"*October 6th*, 1902.

"DEAR MADAM,—

"I find that my friend, Mr. R. J. Campbell, of

[1] "Temporal Power."



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These are the subject of the book and the manner in which that subject is handled. All else is apart from the best interests of literature, and the literary life. When a book from Miss Marie Corelli is issued it seems the fashion in Press circles to discourse largely and loosely of the writer and to say little or nothing of her work.

"The abuse poured on this lady seems to do the sale of her books no harm—it may even increase it—and the supposition is suggestive—but as books and the making of them have an interest apart from the commercial one, it seems time that a protest be made against the unworthy treatment to which one individual is habitually subjected. I have no personal acquaintance with Miss Corelli, and her books give me no more pleasure and no less than do those of Mr. George Meredith, whom your critic seems to place in antithesis to her, this also being the fashion of the moment; it is not in defence of a favourite writer that I wish to express an opinion, but in defence of those qualities that render criticism an honourable calling.

"The heading of the critique in your issue of August 31st, and the introductory section, were alike unworthy of a literary paper and of the pen of a gentleman. The charges of self-advertisement are insulting and untrue. There are few writers who owe as little to the paragraphist as Miss Corelli, while the flouts and jibes flung at her because her books sell extensively are merely stupid. The size of an edition of any book depends on the publisher's knowledge of the demand that awaits it. It might be better, in the interests of literature, to keep commerce and literary merit in separate compartments, but as long as such critical organs as *The Bookman* make a regular feature of

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"The Heath, Dartford."

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Photo by] [*Miss B. Vyver.*

THE ELIZABETHAN WATCH-TOWER, MASON CROFT.

[*To face p.* 312.

friendly critics is shown by a few verses addressed by her to *The Quarterly* in her "Christmas Greeting" (1901). A lacerating article concerning Miss Corelli and her work had appeared in *The Quarterly*, and it drew from her the following little epigram :—

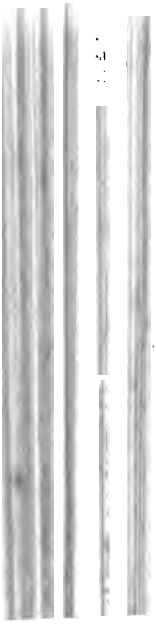
"TO *THE QUARTERLY.*

"WITH THE COMPLIMENTS OF THE SEASON.

"GREETING, old friend! A merry Christmas time
To you, who nothing merry ever see;—
Great Murderer of poets in their prime,—
Why have you struck at *me*?

"With vengeful hooks of sharpened critic-steel
You tortured giants in the days gone by,—
And now upon your creaking, rusty wheel,
You'd break a Butterfly!

"Alas! you're far too cumbrous for such things!
Your heavy, clanking axle drags i' the chase;—
The happy Insect has the use of wings,
And keeps its Sunshine-place!"



A REVIEW of
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was never idle, but

both that village and Clovelly have been faithfully represented. But some of the scenery in her other books, though correct in detail, has never been visited by the novelist at all. "Thelma," which is a frequent companion-volume to travellers in Norway, has certain scenes depicted which are now shown by local guides as associated with the novel, but the writer herself has never visited Norway.

It may be remembered that in "Anne of Geierstein" Walter Scott gives an exact description of Switzerland; but at the time he wrote the novel he had never seen that country. We have already told how Sir Henry Drummond Wolff, a great authority on Persia, called on Miss Corelli shortly after the publication of "Ardath" to inquire personally where she had resided in the East, to be so familiar with Eastern colour and surroundings; and he was very much surprised to learn that she had never visited the East at all, nor had any idea of going there. In the same way, though "Vendetta" is an essentially Neapolitan story, she has never seen Naples. Nor does she "read up" for her local colour. When asked to explain how she manages to convey herself in spirit to countries with which she is entirely unacquainted, she replies: "I *imagine* it must be so, and I find it generally *is* so." As she stated

in her lecture at Edinburgh on "The Vanishing Gift," she thinks Imagination is a decaying faculty in the present day. "People seem unable to project themselves into either the past or the future," she says, "and yet that is the only way to gauge the events of the present."

Marie Corelli is a fair linguist, having a thorough knowledge of French and Italian. She can read Balzac and Dante as readily as she can read Walter Scott—these three, by the way, being particular favourites of hers.

Marlowe describes a library as containing "infinite riches in a little room." Though no millionaire in her possession of this kind of wealth,

persuade her to settle there. The cause is a very simple one. From her earliest childhood she had been encouraged by her adopted father, Dr. Charles Mackay, to entertain a great adoration for the name and the works of Shakespeare, and before she was nine years old she used to recite, at his request, whole passages from the plays of the great Master. When she returned from school, he promised to take her for a "pilgrimage," as he termed it, to all the places made notable by Shakespeare's association with them, and to this pilgrimage she had looked forward with the greatest expectation. But it was never to be, for Dr. Mackay's illness came on and prevented all such plans of pleasure from being fulfilled.

When the aged poet died, and his adopted child, broken-hearted at his loss, and feeling herself utterly alone in the world, knew not how to endure the weary days following immediately on his death, she suddenly bethought herself of the "pilgrimage" she and the dear one she had loved so well had arranged to make together. She determined to carry out the plan, and her friend Miss Vyver (who lost her mother in the same year as that of Dr. Mackay's death) accompanied her, as did her step-brother, Mr. Eric Mackay. With sorrow as well as interest, she went over every scene her early teaching had made her familiar with, and was so

charmed with Warwickshire, and Stratford in particular, that she was anxious to leave London at once, and take up her residence in Shakespeare's town. This was in 1890, when only four of her books had been published.

Her wishes in this respect, however, she subordinated to those of her step-brother, who preferred London ; but from that time she always cherished the memory of Stratford-on-Avon, and hoped she would be able to return thither. Finally, in 1898, when Eric Mackay's death deprived her of her last remaining link with her childhood, save her ever-faithful friend Miss Vyver, and when she was extremely ill from the effects of long sickness,

improving and restoring it, she has now brought it back to look something like it must have been in the fifteenth century, when it was quite an important house, requiring a "watch-tower," wherein a watchman was set to guard the property, and which still stands in the garden, having been transformed into a cosy summer "study" for the novelist. Every month sees some new addition to the charming oak-panelled rooms, which are essentially home-like, and Miss Corelli's love of flowers, which amounts to a passion, shows itself in the mass of blossom which in winter, equally as in the summer, adorns her "winter-garden," leading out from the drawing-room.

She is very fond of the home she has made, and fond of the town in which it stands, and her reason for living in Stratford arises simply out of the old cherished sentiment of her childhood's days when she was taught to consider the little town as the real "Heart of England," where the greatest of poets had birth, and where her idolised step-father had promised to "pass many happy days with her." She takes the keenest interest in all the joys and sorrows of Stratford's townspeople, and grudges neither trouble nor expense in anything that may bring them pleasure or good.

It is well-known that she thinks it regrettable that the Memorial Theatre should be so little used,

owing to the high fees asked for it, and that good actors should find it impossible to risk going down to perform there, unless their expenses are guaranteed, particularly as it is the only "self-endowed" theatre in England! She possesses an interesting letter from the late Charles Flower, who gave the largest share of the money required to build the place, in which it is plainly set forth that his idea of the theatre was to let it at a merely "nominal fee," in order that the best actors might go to Stratford and play Shakespeare's works, in the best manner, to the Stratford townspeople, who were only to be asked "popular" prices for admission.

But, since that estimable benefactor's death, things

Photo by] [*Douglas McNeille.*

MISS CORELLI'S BOATMAN AND PUNT.

[*To face p.* 320.

all the world was with her, as well as Stratford itself. She does all the good she can in the neighbourhood ; she has quite revivified the Choral Society ; she gives short, simple addresses to workmen and school-children ; she opens bazaars and sales of work, and by her presence at such functions brings much-needed pecuniary help to institutions which always feel, to a greater or less extent, the pinch of poverty.

The desire to do good to one's fellow-creatures must animate every writer whose work is not solely the product of intellect. When there is "heart" in a book, there must be a heart that can throb for others in the author of it. Pass the lives of eminent authors before you in rapid mental review, and you will find that most of these authors were constantly performing kindly actions. The great souls of Dickens and Thackeray—of the latter especially—prompted them to do many generous things. It is said that when, as an editor, Thackeray found a letter with a manuscript telling a tale of pathetic circumstances, he would sometimes (when obliged to return the manuscript) scribble out a cheque on his own account and send it back with the rejected story. Turning to women writers, has not Mrs. Gaskell, in her touching Life of Charlotte Brontë, told us how she and the poor Yorkshire clergyman's daughter paid sundry afternoon calls in the Haworth

district, and how welcome was the novelist's "quiet presence" in many humble homes? Ruskin's kindness and open-handed charity, as one who visited him has told us, were proverbial in the Brantwood neighbourhood. The history of Dr. Johnson's home life proves amply the tenderness which lay behind his pompous and dictatorial manner. Poor Goldsmith's generosity amounted almost to a vice, for he would borrow a guinea to give to a friend in need and empty his pockets for a whining mendicant. His philanthropy was wholesale, and quite lacked any sense of proportion. Scott worked himself to death to pay off the debts of the publishing firm in which he was concerned;—turn where you will, you find that the men and women whose work in life has been the making of songs and dramas and novels, have ever been keenly alive to the distress prevalent among their fellow-creatures, and have seldom been guilty of anything approaching selfishness.

It would not be meet in the present work to touch in any but the most passing way on Miss Corelli's practical philanthropy. But it is only due to her, in a biographical work published mainly to explain what she *is*—as opposed to what so many malicious paragraphists have declared her to be—to pay a tribute to her consideration for others, and her desire to make the best use of such worldly possessions

as the extensive sale of her works has naturally brought her.

Those, however, who accuse her of "self-advertisement" will do well to remember that by such an absolutely false clamour they are depriving many in need from assistance which they might obtain were the novelist certain that her actions would not be misrepresented and misconstrued. For nothing makes her happier than to see others happy. She has helped many strugglers in the literary profession, too, and literary men and women who disparage her may be surprised to hear that she has herself never been known to say an injurious word with regard to any one of her fellow-authors.

It may be asked—what is Marie Corelli's life-programme? Most writers have a definite object in view—this one to achieve immortality; that one to make money. What is Marie Corelli's?

Briefly, she writes,—has always written,—to reach the hearts and minds of those thinking people of to-day who are striving to combat the subtleties of the Agnostic and Atheist; to strengthen their faith in the truth, the reality, the goodness of God and Christianity; the people who have hearts that throb with tenderness, hope, love and sincerity. She would purify society. She would exalt everything that is noble and good. She would destroy the rule of unbelief and insincerity, and raise in

its place ideal characters and conditions strongly built upon a foundation of faith and truth. Such is Marie Corelli's programme.

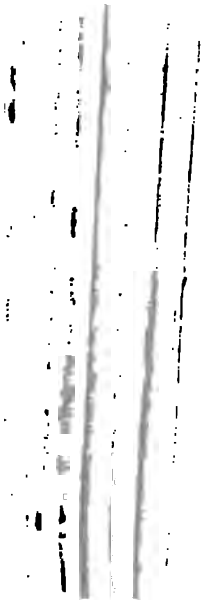
The interest taken by the novelist in social questions has led her to correspond with working-men's clubs in America and the colonies, and not a few papers have been written by her to serve as subjects for discussion in such institutions.

But what of that self of which so much has been heard? It is a personality striking in its simplicity and in its power. Marie Corelli is a woman of women, simple in her tastes, strong in her faiths and her aims, with a heart full of sympathy for others, living a busy life that from its productiveness in the world of literature is a constant influence for good in the hearts and homes of thousands the world over, and, in its private relationships, a source of help, inspiration, and benefit to those with whom she comes in contact.

That she is not merely a lover of Shakespeare, but a Shakespeare enthusiast, is known to all her friends; she would see the day come, if possible, and help to speed its coming, when the whole town of Stratford-on-Avon shall be a Shakespeare memorial. She would exclude steam-launches and all similar misplaced modernities from the peaceful Avon; she would have every new building that is erected in the birthplace of Shakespeare

constructed in accordance with the architecture of the Master's day; she would sacredly and lovingly guard every old building and the form of all Stratford's old streets; she would have the store-house, that exists there, of never explored sixteenth-century records, thoroughly ransacked and reported upon, as it should be, by competent and national authorities, and given an adequate place and publicity. We should hear little more then, we venture to assert, of Baconian theories. Miss Corelli would have, moreover (and perhaps the statement may help to further the object), a great development of the Shakespeare Festival at Stratford. She would like it to be the Bayreuth of Literature. She would establish a central Shakespearean Society, with branches all over the world, which would circulate notes of interest among all Shakespeare lovers, and hold annual conferences in connection with the April Shakespearean celebrations.

Now, as to Marie Corelli's "public." The great sale of her works proves it to be a vast one, and the fact that her publishers have not found it advisable to issue her in sixpenny form is clear proof that she commands the purses of those who are able to afford six shillings. And although the possession of money is no guarantee of literary taste, yet it stands to reason that the upper and middle classes, taken in the mass, are the chief



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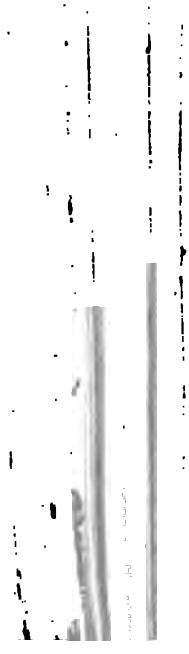
visit Australia or New Zealand she would receive an almost "royal" welcome, so great is the enthusiasm in the "New World" for anything that comes from her pen.

Marie Corelli's acquaintances are many in number, but her circle of friends is a small and carefully selected one. Shakespeare's "He that is thy friend indeed" can be applied, even in the case of a popular novelist, to but few persons. Where Miss Corelli is, there always is her devoted friend Miss Vyver. Between these two there is perfect understanding and absolute sympathy. It goes without saying that, until the day of his death, Dr. Mackay held chief place in his adopted daughter's heart, and, though dead, holds it still. The kind old publisher, George Bentley, was, perhaps, owing to his unceasing sympathy and delicate appreciation of her nature, the best friend Marie Corelli ever had outside her own family circle.

But many of the social and artistic world's great personages are among her most frequent guests and correspondents. The numerous letters she has from famous men and women would almost make a journal of contemporary history. Many eminent persons appear to set considerable value on her opinions, judging from the questions they ask of her, and the urgency with which they press for an answer.



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From a Sketch by] [*W. H. Quatremain.*

A BOATING PLACE ON THE AVON.

From a Sketch by] [*W. H. Quatremain.*

A FAVOURITE REACH ON THE AVON.

[*To face p.* 328.

week out, she toils at her desk for several hours every morning, and it is by such methods of regularity and application that she has succeeded in writing such long, as well as such successful, novels.

The following sketch, contributed to *The Manchester Chronicle* last summer by the editor, Mr. J. Cuming Walters, affords a very complete picture of Marie Corelli as she is to-day :—

"In the old-world town of Stratford-on-Avon stands an Elizabethan red-brick house, its window-sills brightened with flowers which hang down in profusion and impart gaiety of aspect to the ancient and time-worn edifice. Here, near the Guild Church and the school that Shakespeare knew, in the quietest part of the town, dwells, with her loyal companion and friend, Miss Marie Corelli.

"What manner of woman is this most popular novelist of the hour, who has the reading world at her feet, and who has conquered the hearts of millions? Until lately she was thought to be a mystery. One has only to know her to marvel why. For Marie Corelli does not shroud herself in obscurity, does not affect the life of the recluse, does not pretend to be other than she is—a winsome, warm-hearted, sunny-natured woman, who enjoys life to the full, and would have others enjoy theirs, who has ideals and tries to live up to them, and who asks only to be freed from vulgar intrusion and the slanderous shafts of unseen enemies. In her delightful Stratford home she lives in a serene atmosphere; she regards the spot as

hallowed; she has the artist's love of the beautiful Warwickshire scenery, and the woman's tenderness for all around her; the cottagers know her charity, and all good causes enjoy her aid and patronage. Here she dwells in a happy environment, and works with ardour, for her day's labour begins at sunrise; yet she has always a spare hour for a friend, or a spare afternoon in which to act the gracious hostess towards visitors.

"What first strikes one on meeting Miss Corelli is her intensely sympathetic nature. She will be found in all probability amid her choice flowers in the spacious winter-garden, and her face irradiates as she advances to meet you with outstretched hands and smiling lips. A small creature, with a mass of waving golden hair—"pale gold such as the Tuscan's early art prefers"—with dimpled cheeks and expressive eyes, almost childlike at first glance but with immense reserves of energy—that is Marie Corelli; but her chief charm is perhaps the liquid softness of her voice. She began life as a singer and musician, and as one hears her speak it is easy to understand that had she not been a force in literature she might have been a controlling influence in the world of song. In the hall her harp still stands, but more often her fingers stray over the notes of a piano, perchance making the instrument give forth a melody of her own composing.

"A visitor is soon quite at ease. Formality is dispensed with. The keynote in Miss Corelli's house is Sincerity. She is a brilliant conversationalist, but a good listener too. She talks freely and without conscious effort, and one's faith in her is speedily inspired. What does she talk about? Just enough about herself to make her auditor wish for more; yet, with

a condescension that is all grace, she is eager to hear all that her visitor has to say on the subjects nearest his own heart. Particularly does she like the theme to be the old loved authors, and whatever one has to tell of Dickens, or Thackeray, or Tennyson—and even if one should have a theory about Shakespeare—in Miss Corelli he will find not only the ardent listener but a woman whose quick and well-stored mind enables her to take up readily a debatable point, to help to resolve some doubt or mystery, or to add profitably to one's own stock of knowledge. No one can converse with her for an hour and come away unenriched.

"Yes, she not only writes enchantingly, but she herself enchants. In her presence you are under a spell. 'There's witchcraft in it.' Her youth and her artlessness disarm you—you are left wondering how this fair young creature could have fought her way alone in the world (her life has been a battle), how she could have conquered opposition, and how she could have attained to her present supremacy. It may verge upon extravagance to say it, but there is something to marvel at in the fact that at an age long before that at which George Eliot had written her first story Miss Corelli had given us a dozen remarkable and original romances of world-wide fame, and there is no guessing yet what achievements lie before her and what position she may gain. Her powers are waxing rather than waning, and a month or two ago when the last two chapters of 'Temporal Power' were in her hand, we heard her say she hoped that in this book she had reached a higher stage than in any she had previously written.

"But it is not only as a writer, as a necromancer with a magic pen, that one may admire Marie Corelli. She

is a very woman, too, with a woman's likes and dislikes, a woman's feelings, a woman's impulses, a woman's preferences and prejudices—and she is quite frank concerning all. You like her the better for being so purely human. She is never happier than when arranging a maypole dance for the children or organising Christmas festivities for the poor and helpless. Look round her charming rooms, and behold the evidence of the feminine hand there. Observe the taste of her dress—dress, by the way, which, with all its elegance, does not come from France, is not the 'creation' or the 'confection' of a Paris costumier, but is English in every detail. For there is no truer, more loyal, more patriotic soul than Marie Corelli, and she will tell you, with a touch of quiet pride, that every servant she has about her is English, that the cloth she wears is English, that the furniture of her

some sacrifice, too, for, wondrously calm as she may be at the critical moment of action, her nerves are sorely shaken both before and afterwards. She taxes her memory greatly also. It may perhaps scarcely be credited that the address she delivered at Glasgow, which occupied an hour and a half, was learnt off by heart and spoken without a slip.

"But it is not our intention to reveal further of her private life; we know full well it would be displeasing to herself if we did so, and an unwarrantable breach of confidence. She is no notoriety-hunter. She does not cultivate the personal paragraph, and would no more tolerate the prying busybody than she does the camera-fiend who waylays her in the hope of obtaining snap-shots. Why, she asks, should the veil be lifted merely to satisfy a vulgar and idle curiosity? Her private life is as sacred as that of any other person, and it is merely pandering to a depraved modern taste to lay bare 'the poet's house,' as Browning put it.

> "'Outside should suffice for evidence:
> And whoso desires to penetrate
> Deeper, must dive by the spirit-sense.'

"One remark only need be added: Miss Corelli has been the victim of much misunderstanding in the past, of some injustice, and—alas, that it should have to be said—of deliberate malevolence. Those who are privileged to enjoy her friendship best know her admirable qualities, and entertain none but the kindest sentiments towards her and the best wishes for her continued triumphs. Her influence is vast and far-reaching. She writes with a purpose, she has used her gifts as she best knows how, and her fiery crusade, stern and determined as that of John Knox, against social evils

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